

THE THEOLOGY OF JAMES MORISON,
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO HIS THEORIES OF THE ATONEMENT

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PREFACE

The teaching of James Morison had a part in shaping theological thought in Scotland during the nineteenth century. It was also one of the first indications in that century of the trend which thinking on theological themes was about to take. For these reasons, among others, we believe that some knowledge of the Morisonian theology is important for the student of the history of the Church and its theological development in this country. Morison, however, did not give a systematic presentation of his views, nor has this ever been done for him. To understand his opinions, it has been necessary to read a considerable number of works. It is the purpose of this thesis, therefore, to provide the reader with a summary of the theological teaching of Morison, special consideration being given to his theories of the nature and extent of the atonement.

As an introduction to the subject, a brief sketch of the life of Dr Morison has been given. Without attempting to write a new biography, the main facts of the life of Morison, and especially those which are concerned with his theological development and his trials, have been set forth. The theological debates which took place during the trials, however, have not been dealt with, for Morison's position and many of the objections to its central points are given in the chapters which follow. The charge of disingenuousness has been considered at length, for we believe that it is in connexion with this that the existing biographies are likely to

give the reader an erroneous impression. Some points of importance, which have merely been mentioned in the sketch, receive a fuller treatment in subsequent chapters.

In Chapter Two, an attempt has been made to give a clear, concise, and systematic statement of Morison's theology. The material for this has been gathered from many of his works, and, in general, the arrangement which Morison himself uses in his "Gospel Catechism" has been followed. Criticism of Morison's positions has not been given in this chapter, except when it has been thought that a few critical remarks would help to clarify the subject. The distinctive features of Morison's theology have been discussed at greater length than the others, but it has not been thought necessary to give an exposition of his views on church government. For these views on the government of the church, the reader is referred to the pamphlet, "Evangelical Union; Its Origin, and a Statement of Its Principles", and to the biographies of James Morison.

For any study of the theology of Morison, the doctrine of the atonement is especially important, for it has been with this doctrine that his name has been most closely associated. Although error with regard to the atonement was not directly charged against him by the Presbytery of Kilmarnock, it was evident that his views on this doctrine were at the heart of the objections to his teachings. Furthermore, his views on the atonement largely determined the nature of his other distinctive opinions. In Chapter Three, therefore, we have endeavoured to state clearly and accurately the theories of Morison on the atonement, and for his views of its

extent, we have set forth the main proofs which he has offered. The absence of Scriptural proof in this chapter for the distinctive points of his view of the nature of the atonement is accounted for by the fact that we have been able to find no such proof in his works.

We have sought to give in Chapter Four the main influences which led James Morison to depart from the teaching of his Church on the doctrine of the atonement, and to adopt the governmental theory as to its nature and the theory of hypothetical redemption as to its extent. As the influences which led Morison to abandon the theory of hypothetical redemption and to adopt an Arminian position are dealt with in Chapter One, we have not repeated them in this chapter. Besides two general influences, the line of theological influence has been traced in some detail. About the nature of this last, there has been considerable controversy; so we have thought it necessary to enter into the question carefully. As far as space has permitted, we have sought to furnish proof for the position which we have adopted. It is by no means denied that there were other influences, but we believe that those which we have given are the most important. In two appendices, we have considered the possibility of the influence of some others on Morison besides those of whom we have already written.

The Fifth Chapter is devoted to a criticism of Morison's final positions on the nature and extent of the atonement. A criticism of all of the distinctive points of his theology is obviously impossible in such a short work; so it has been decided to criticize

only his views on the atonement, for, as we have said, these are central in his system. It has not been possible to be exhaustive in giving even this criticism; and so we have confined our attention to some of the more important objections. In criticizing Morison's opinions on the extent of the atonement, we have limited ourselves, except in one instance, to an examination of those of his arguments which we have summarized in Chapter Three. Inasmuch as it has been possible to give in this chapter only a brief statement of each of Morison's arguments, the reader is requested to see the fuller statements of them in Chapter Three.

In the closing chapter, an attempt has been made to determine the extent of the influence of James Morison on the theological thought of Scotland. Being convinced that the extent of his influence cannot be understood unless the other agencies which were working to accomplish similar ends be considered, we have briefly indicated some of the general and theological influences of the nineteenth century which were instrumental in bringing about a change in the theological outlook of Scotland. It is not to be thought that these were all of the forces which helped to shape theological thought in this country during the last century; they are merely some of the important ones. After this short survey, an attempt has been made to determine how much influence Morison actually had.

A word should be said about the footnotes. In these there are, of course, many references to the works of Morison. In order to save space, the initials "J.M." have been used to indicate

"James Morison". Except for those cases in which we have used two editions of a work, or for some other special reason, we have not indicated in the footnotes the edition, publisher, or date of publication of the works used; for this information the reader is referred to the bibliography. In the case of Morison's pamphlet, "The Nature of the Atonement", it has been indicated in a footnote that the edition of 1843 has been used throughout the thesis. There are a great many references to articles by Morison which appeared in "The Evangelical Repository". When reference is made to an article for the first time, the volume, number, and date of publication are given. Thereafter, the reader is requested to consult the bibliography for this information.

The bibliography contains only those works which were consulted during the preparation of this thesis. We have adopted an alphabetical arrangement of works in each section, except that which contains the articles by Morison; these have been arranged in the order of publication.

We wish to thank all of those friends who have given valuable assistance by their helpful advice, by their lending of rare books and pamphlets, and by their proof reading.

CHAPTER ONE.

INTRODUCTION:

A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF JAMES MORISON.

CHAPTER ONE.

A BRIEF SKETCH OF THE LIFE OF JAMES MORISON.

At the end of the third decade of the nineteenth century, a young theologian began his work of introducing revolutionary doctrines into the midst of Calvinistic Scotland. This young man was James Morison, the founder of the Evangelical Union Church, which to-day is part of the Congregational Union of Scotland. Before Morison's time, there had been individuals in Scotland who had held the doctrines which he so warmly advocated; but it can be truly said, nevertheless, that with James Morison Arminianism first invaded Scotland, for he was certainly the first to popularize it in this country. The heresy trial, the preaching, the teaching, and the writings of this man made him so generally known that during part of the last century his name was a household word in Scotland. Some held that name in reverence, others held it up to scorn, but people of all classes of society frequently had it on their lips for one reason or another. To-day he is hardly known at all; and there are few who can tell what the theological views are which he defended and propagated throughout a long life.

The work of Morison has not been without its significance for the subsequent theological and religious thought of Scotland; and we are of the conviction that some knowledge of the doctrinal teaching of Morison is of value to one who would understand the trend of theological thought in this country during the past hundred years.

Most of this treatise, therefore, will be devoted to the consideration of the several aspects of Morison's theology. Before we enter upon that, however, we shall make a rapid survey of his life, paying particular attention to his theological development and his heresy trial.

James Morison was born in the Secession Manse, Bathgate, on February 14, 1816.¹ Before the union of the Burgher Church and the Anti-burgher Church in 1820 to form the United Secession Church, Robert Morison, the father of James, had belonged to the Anti-burgher section.² It is said that Robert Morison had considerable intellectual power, and that he was a man of influence in his community, Presbytery, and Synod.³ The mother of James died when he was very young; so he was reared, along with two sisters, by his father and a maternal aunt.⁴ The religious training which James received was good, and there early arose in him a desire to enter the Christian ministry.⁵

When he was fourteen years old, he entered the University of Edinburgh.⁶ Young Morison took a high place in his classes in Greek and moral philosophy, and he also acquired a competent knowledge of French, German, Italian, and Hebrew.⁷ He studied very hard, and in so doing neglected the laws of health. His course of study was thus interrupted, and it was thought by many that he

1. W. Adamson - "The Life of the Rev. James Morison, D.D.," p.14.
 2. Ibid., p.37.
 3. F. Ferguson - "A History of the Evangelical Union," pp.2,3.
 4. W. Adamson - Op. cit., p.16.
 5. Ibid., pp.20,21.
 6. Ibid., p.24.
 7. O. Smeaton - "Principal James Morison," pp.23-25 (Summary).

was going home to die. For a long time his life was in the balance, but he slowly recovered his strength. Ferguson says that poor health and close contact with death made the young student more devout,⁸ and Oliphant Smeaton adds that there is good reason to suppose that it was during this illness that James Morison first knew what experimental religion meant.⁹

In 1834 when he was eighteen years old, Morison entered the Theological Hall of the United Secession Church. The session was a short one, lasting only two months, August and September; so he was able to begin his theological studies before he had completed his University curriculum. The classes of the Hall met that year in Glasgow, and were presided over by four, instead of as formerly by two professors. The Rev. Dr Mitchell was the professor of Biblical Literature; Dr Balmer taught Systematic Theology; Dr Duncan occupied the Chair of Pastoral Theology; and the Rev. Dr John Brown had been appointed provisionally to the Chair of Exegetical Theology.¹⁰ Of all these men, John Brown had the greatest influence on young Morison. In a letter to his father, he told of his fondness for Professor Brown and of his eagerness and that of the other students to keep Dr Brown in his Chair.¹¹ Adamson and Smeaton tell us that Morison owed much to John Brown. It was Brown who helped him to solve his youthful doubts;¹² it was from Brown that he received his love for exegesis.¹³

8. F. Ferguson - "A History of the Evangelical Union," pp.3,4.

9. O. Smeaton - Op. cit., p.30.

10. W. Adamson - Op. cit., pp.37,38, and O. Smeaton - Op. cit., p.34.

11. W. Adamson - Op. cit., p.38.

12. O. Smeaton - Op. cit., p.42.

13. W. Adamson - Op. cit., p.38.

While James Morison was still in the Theological Hall, the word "heresy" was first associated with his name. In two essays upon the "Sonship of Christ", Morison expressed views which aroused considerable excitement not only in the Hall, but also in the Se-
cession Presbytery of Edinburgh. Without denying in any way the real divinity of Jesus Christ, Morison held that Christ was not the eternal Son of the Father, but became the Son of God by virtue of the incarnation. When it appeared probable that a charge of heresy might be brought against this daring speculator, the essays were sent by young Morison to Dr Ralph Wardlaw, the great Congre-
gational divine, in order that his opinion might be pronounced on them. Wardlaw expressed his entire agreement with the opinions set forth in the essays, and such approval was sufficient to give them a permanent place in the Morisonian system of theology.¹⁴

While he was a theological student, Morison took part in several "extra-curricular" activities. He was keenly interested in the voluntary controversy, and he debated publicly with a Mr Leckie, a lecturer on behalf of Establishments. A formal address on the voluntary question which Morison later gave in Falkirk was published.¹⁵ He was also active in forming Total Abstinence Societies; he started a tract society; and he zealously engaged in the work of the Sabbath Schools both of Bathgate and Potterrow Churches.¹⁶

14. O. Smeaton - "Principal James Morison," pp.44,45; and
T. Ferguson - "History of the Evangelical Union," p.4.

15. W. Adamson - Op. cit., p.45.

16. O. Smeaton - Op. cit., p.47.

A severe illness toward the end of 1838 made it necessary for Morison's examinations for licensure to be postponed. He was not licensed, therefore, until the spring of 1839.¹⁷ As a probationer, Morison found many opportunities to preach,¹⁸ before it was decided by the Church Extension Committee of the Secession Church to send him to the North to labour under the direction of the Presbytery of Elgin. Smeaton expresses the opinion that it was because the Committee had some doubts about the young probationer's orthodoxy that they sent him to this isolated district. The Presbytery assigned him to Cabrach, forty-four miles west of Aberdeen.¹⁹

While on his way to the North and after he had reached his destination, Morison read Finney's "Lectures on the Revival of Religion".²⁰ The writings of Mr Finney and his coadjutors in the Oberlin Institute had shortly before been republished and widely circulated in Scotland;²¹ and this work by Finney greatly stirred the young licentiate. The reading of this book convinced him that he had been preaching in the wrong way and with the wrong aim; he began to wonder how suitable the formal discourses which he had prepared would be for the simple folk among whom he was to be stationed. Above all else he now desired to preach in that way which would win souls for Christ.²²

17. W. Adamson - Op. cit., pp.48,49.

18. Ibid., p.49.

19. O. Smeaton - Op. cit., pp.53,54.

20. W. Adamson - "The Life of the Rev. James Morison, D.D.", p.55;
and F. Ferguson - "A History of the Evangelical Union," p.7.

21. F. Ferguson - Op. cit., p.7.

22. W. Adamson - Op. cit., p.55.

On Morison's first Sunday in Cabrach, there were two hundred people present, but the young preacher felt that his written sermon had failed to reach the people. The evening service was to be held in a barn; so he decided he would preach extemporaneously. The result of this type of preaching gladdened his heart; so he determined that he would no longer use his written discourses but would preach from the heart. Thereafter in all of his sermons in Cabrach he spoke without a manuscript. He tried to put into effect the type of preaching recommended by Finney to produce revivals. Practical evangelistic sermons were substituted for his highly polished discourses; and the large crowds which came to the services were deeply moved by the messages which they received.²³

Many of those who were awakened by the young preacher's words to a realization of their hopeless spiritual condition came to him with their personal difficulties, desiring to know especially the way in which they might be saved and how they might receive assurance that they had become the children of God. Morison did not know how to answer their questions about assurance and election, for he felt hampered by some of the articles of the creed of his Church which taught that Christ did not die for all men but only for the elect. He hesitated to tell every enquirer that Christ had died for him in particular. This difficulty led him to consult the Bible, and to analyze his own experience in order to discover on what he was resting his own hope of salvation. While

23. W. Adamson - Op. cit., pp.53-55 (Summary).

he was reading the Scriptures, he found an answer to his problem in I Corinthians 15: 3 and 4 - "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures."⁽²⁴⁾ This passage led him to conclude that the message which was to be preached to every creature is, "Christ died for our sins". If it were to be preached to every creature, it must be true that Christ died for the sins of every creature. Mr Morison now realized for the first time the truth on which he could rest his soul's salvation - the truth that Christ had died for him individually - and for him individually, because for every creature - for all men without distinction or exception.²⁵ "The acknowledgment of this truth," writes Adamson, "issued in what he called his conversion, 'his second birth'. Whether it should be so designated need not be determined. One thing is certain, namely, that at this time he had a fuller vision of what Christ had done for him when He died for his sins, which captivated his entire energies and thrilled his whole being."²⁶

Further examination confirmed Morison in his discovery. He found that such passages as John 3:16 and I John 2:2 plainly taught

24. Unless it is otherwise indicated, all quotations from the Bible which are given in this thesis are from the Authorized Version. This was, of course, the English Bible used by Morison, and we believe it will, therefore, be better for us to use it.

25. O. Smeaton - Op. cit., pp.59-61; and W. Adamson - Op. cit., pp.56-57 (Summary).

26. W. Adamson - Op. cit., p.57.

the universality of the atonement, and could not be misunderstood by any earnest seeker after the truth. They gave Morison a ground for present and perfect assurance, and they gave him a definite message for every one who came enquiring about his soul's salvation. "Out of this message sprang the movement and the theology with which the name of Morison was identified."²⁷

Both in his public and in his private ministrations, the probationer began to make it known that Christ had died for all. The people had never heard such teaching before, and they listened eagerly to the words of the young man. As a further confirmation of the truth of his discovery, James Morison saw a wave of religious enthusiasm springing up as a result of his preaching. He conducted services in Knockando, Elgin, Nairn, Forres and Boghole, and in each place there was a revival. Mr Morison was elated to know that he was having a part in the reawakening of spiritual interest which was going on in many parts of Scotland at this time.²⁸ His father had sent him news of "the Kilsyth revival", and of the untiring efforts of the Burns family there. He rejoiced over this news;²⁹ and there can be no doubt the information which he received concerning these other evangelistic campaigns encouraged him in the work which he had undertaken.³⁰

On the petition of the Presbytery of Elgin, Mr Morison was

27. W. Adamson - "The Life of the Rev. James Morison, D.D." p.58.

28. Ibid., pp.61-62 (Summary).

29. F. Ferguson - "A History of the Evangelical Union," p.7;
and W. Adamson - Op. cit., p.59.

30. A. Robertson - "History of the Atonement Controversy," pp.
160-161.

sent to Tain to labour during December and January. After his return home, he preached in several Secession churches, and among these was the Clerk's Lane Church in Kilmarnock.³¹ Young Morison was asked to become one of the candidates for the pulpit of the Clerk's Lane Church; and on April 15, 1840, he was called to be the pastor. The call was not unanimous; but after several weeks of prayerful consideration, he decided to accept it.³²

Shortly after this occurred an event which was destined to have many lasting effects on the career of James Morison. His trials before the Presbytery were not to take place until the first of September; so Morison determined to return to the North to preach at Nairn, Lerwick, and other places. While he was on this preaching tour, many requests came to him to put his central teachings into writing, in order that those who had been so much helped by them might have them close at hand. In addition, there were many requests which came by post, and the great majority of these required answers about the way of salvation. Morison decided that it would be wise for him to publish his teachings in a little tract. Thus appeared his first real publication - the tract, "The Question, 'What Must I Do to be Saved?' Answered."³³ Apparently because he feared that some statements in the pamphlet might offend some of the ministers of the Presbytery of Kilmarnock who did not know him personally and who had already heard reports of his heresies,

31. W. Adamson - Op. cit., pp.63 and 70.

32. O. Smeaton - Op. cit., pp.72,74,75 (Summary).

33. O. Smeaton - "Principal James Morison," pp.77,80, and "Report of the Proceedings of the United Associate Synod in the Cases of the Rev. James Morison," etc., p.30.

Morison came to the conclusion that he should publish the tract with a pseudonym.³⁴ Morison himself later came to realize the folly of using a fictitious name; and so we find his name given on all of the editions which followed. The theology of the tract is that of Moderate Calvinism; the universality of the atonement is taught, but unconditional and eternal election is also set forth. Morison attempts to harmonize these doctrines in exactly the same way as does Amyraldus. Fergus Ferguson declares that the section on election is completely out of harmony with the rest of the tract.³⁵ This section remained, however, through the sixth edition, and it was not until that of 1844 that it was left out.

On September 1, 1840, Morison took his examinations before the Presbytery of Kilmarnock. Adamson expresses the opinion that the exercises which were prescribed were set to test not only the probationer's scholarship, but also his orthodoxy. Adamson gives as the reason for this the fact that young Morison's reputation as a "heretic" had preceded him. In a letter to his father, Morison wrote that the question of the extent of the atonement was the subject of a lengthy conversation, but that finally the presbyters agreed that his views were the same as their own. Morison said that they did this even after he openly and boldly told them his views.³⁶ When it was later charged that Morison concealed his opinions during his "trials", he answered that he had to keep within the limits of the subjects assigned to him, but that he had

34. W. Adamson - Op. cit., pp.77,78.

35. F. Ferguson - Op. cit., p.22.

36. W. Adamson - Op. cit., pp.88,89.

brought out his views on faith as simple belief and on ability as limiting responsibility.³⁷ No records were kept of what had been said; so it is impossible for us to determine to what extent and how clearly Morison explained his distinctive views. It seems strange, however, that he was able to explain his views fully during the "trials" and was approved, and yet that those same views, as published in the pamphlet, "The Question, 'What Must I Do to be Saved?' Answered" and as later presented orally, should cause so much controversy.

The ordination was not to take place until the first of October. Meanwhile the tract had made its appearance; and many rumours of James Morison's heterodoxy were to be heard.³⁸ It appears, however, that the tract was not very widely circulated at this time, at least in the Kilmarnock district, for only one or two members of the Presbytery had seen it before the day of the ordination, and not one of them had a copy of it.³⁹ The Rev. Mr Elles of Saltcoats said during the trial before the Synod that previously to the ordination of Morison he could get a copy "for neither love nor money".⁴⁰ Another member of the Presbytery is declared, in the "statement of the Presbytery" made to the Synod in the case of Morison, to have had only a hasty perusal of the anonymous tract ascribed to James Morison as the author, and

37. "Report of the Proceedings of the United Associate Synod ... Cases ... James Morison," etc., p.54.

38. O. Smeaton - Op. cit., p.87; and W. Adamson - Op. cit., p.89.

39. F. Ferguson - "A History of the Evangelical Union," p.26.

40. "Report of the Proceedings of the United Associate Synod ... Cases ... James Morison," etc., p.35.

though he had endeavoured to procure a copy, or copies of it, for the purpose of calling the attention of his brethren to it, he could not even get a copy from the publisher. All of the copies had been taken out of the hands of the publisher. Other efforts to get a copy of the pamphlet were equally unsuccessful.⁴¹ The only explanation of this action which the Presbytery could assign was that Morison knew that a knowledge of the contents of the tract on the part of the presbyters would adversely affect his chances of ordination.

Before both the Presbytery and the Synod, Mr Morison acknowledged that the pamphlet had been kept out of the booksellers' shops. He said that some friends had told him "that the shape which he had given to his views of the gospel, might excite the prejudices of his brethren in the Presbytery of Kilmarnock, provided they saw the tract before they became personally acquainted with him". Morison declared that he had yielded to the advice of these friends to keep the tract out of the shops of the booksellers, although it was opposed to his own inclination. "He fondly hoped that, when his fathers and brethren knew him personally, and saw that he was sincere, - he fondly hoped that they would give a candid and favourable perusal to his treatise."⁴²

The first day of October, 1840, had been set as the day of James Morison's ordination; so on that day a large crowd gathered in the Clerk's Lane Church to witness the ceremony. When the hour

41. "Report of the Proceedings of the United Associate Synod ... Cases ... James Morison," etc., p.15.

42. Ibid., p.30 (Summary).

for the service arrived, the Presbytery and the minister-elect did not appear in the church auditorium. In the session-house, the young probationer was being further examined as to his theological views. The ministers who had seen the tract expressed the opinion that there were some views contained therein which should be investigated.⁴³ Inasmuch as no member of the Presbytery had a copy of the tract, Morison acknowledged himself to be the author of it and produced a copy. There was not sufficient time for a careful examination of the whole of it, but certain passages of a rather startling nature were read, and Morison gave explanations of these which were deemed satisfactory. He said that he was sorry that his language had been misunderstood, for "he would not contend for modes of expression; but with regard to the doctrine, the real doctrine of the tract, he could not, and would not, preach any other".⁴⁴

After the examination had been carried on for about an hour, the presbyters seemed disposed to delay the ordination in order that they might have time to investigate the pamphlet more thoroughly. At that point a member of the Presbytery who had been sitting near the minister-elect said that Morison was willing to agree to three things: "1st, to express his regret for having used language which conveyed to the minds of the Presbytery ideas which were unsound and inconsistent with our subordinate standards; 2nd, to

43. O. Smeaton - "Principal James Morison," pp.88,89.

44. "Report of the Proceedings of the United Associate Synod ... Cases ... James Morison," etc., p.15 (Summary).

suppress the further circulation of the tract in which that language was used; and 3rd, that he would in future study modes of expression that would not be so liable to be misunderstood."⁴⁵ When, in addition to this, Morison affirmed that he had not the slightest difficulty in giving the most solemn expression of his adherence to the subordinate standards, the Presbytery agreed to proceed with his ordination, though the records of the trial before the Synod declare that it was "with the greatest difficulty" that they did so.⁴⁶

It should be noted that Morison affirmed that he had no difficulty in subscribing to the subordinate standards of the Secession Church. When later this was called into question, Morison declared before the Synod that when "he went before the presbytery, he had the distinct understanding on his mind, that he held opinions quite reconcilable with the standards of the Church. He never dreamed that he could not consistently subscribe the Confession of Faith, and the more especially as he had reason to believe that there were men in the Church who held views similar to his own. He went into the presbytery, and became a member of it, subscribing the Confession of Faith, without having the slightest mental reservation of any kind. He did not think it necessary that his views should coincide in every particular with those of the standards, but he nevertheless had no idea that his views

45. "Report of the Proceedings of the United Associate Synod ... Cases ... James Morison," etc., p.15.

46. Ibid., pp.15,16.

differed in any point that could deserve specification."⁴⁷

When the members of the Synod spoke during the trial, the Rev. Mr Frazer, of Alloa, pointed out a contradiction in this statement of Morison. He called attention to the fact that Morison had denied that he had accepted the Confession of Faith "with mental reservation"; and yet, immediately afterwards declared. "that he did not reckon himself bound to every aspect of doctrine, or to every particular doctrine contained in the Confession and Catechisms, but merely to their main scope."⁴⁸

In his statement to the Synod, Morison confessed that he was in error in not comparing his sentiments more carefully with the standards; "but it was a fact, that he had not done so."⁴⁹ Mr Elles later spoke on this admission of Morison. He thought it a singular confession for him to make, when it was considered on the day of his ordination that he pledged himself to believe the doctrines contained in these standards. Mr Elles continued by saying that he would leave it to the court to decide "what value could be attached to those standards, when a solemn oath of assent was given to them, without the doctrines which they contained having been carefully studied".⁵⁰

The introduction of Mr Morison took place on the following Sunday; and in the afternoon, he himself occupied the pulpit.⁵¹

47. "Report of the Proceedings of the United Associate Synod ... Cases ... James Morison," etc., p.30.

48. Ibid., p.58.

49. Ibid., p.30.

50. Ibid., p.34.

51. O. Smeaton - Op. cit., p.91.

According to Adamson, the "caution of the Presbytery on this occasion was not willingly set at nought, but it did not put fetters either on his heart or his intellect."⁵² Ferguson adds that when the young preacher faced his large congregation, he seemed to be saying in his heart, "I will obey God, rather than man"; and thus it need not be a matter of astonishment that, in this first sermon Morison burst his bonds and proclaimed "the atonement of Calvary's bleeding Lamb to 'every sinner, without distinction and without exception'".⁵³ Moreover, the works which Morison published between his ordination and his trial before the Presbytery are on the themes to which objection had been made, and the same objectionable language was used in these as had been used in the first tract.

The fellow-presbyters of Morison became incensed over this, for they believed he had broken his promise; and he was charged before the Presbytery with having done so. In the records of the trial before the Synod, the Presbytery declared that if Mr Morison at the time of his ordination used language which implied that he reserved any right to use the expressions which had been objected to, or to convey the very same ideas, most assuredly the Presbytery did not so understand him; and then when he so readily adopted the standards of the Church as his own views, they believed he would avoid in the future what had been pointed out by the presbyters as inconsistent with those standards. If this had not been the case, the Presbytery would not have proceeded with the ordination.⁵⁴

52. W. Adamson - Op. cit., p.94.

53. F. Ferguson - Op. cit., pp.28,29.

54. "Report of the Proceedings of the United Associate Synod ... Cases ... James Morison," etc., pp.15,16.

To this Morison replied by pointing out that he had stated repeatedly on the day of his ordination that he had no other views of divine truth on which to rest his own soul, and that he could not, and would not, preach any other doctrines.⁵⁵ Mr Elles agreed that Morison had made this statement, but he begged the court to mark the time at which it was made. "It was," he said, "when he (Morison) came in that he said this; he virtually retracted his expressions before the presbytery would proceed."⁵⁶ Morison denied this; he asserted that whether or not the Presbytery recollected it, he had made the statement a few minutes before they left the session-house.⁵⁷ It so happens that no records were kept of the conversations which took place during the presbyterial examination on the day of Morison's ordination; so it is quite impossible at this late date to determine definitely whether it was Mr Morison or Mr Elles who made the accurate statement before the Synod as to the time of Morison's statement that he could not, and would not, preach any other gospel than that which he had preached. If Mr Elles, in making his statement, had the support of his fellow-presbyters, we might assume that the testimony of several witnesses is more reliable than that of one; but while none of the presbyters contradicted Mr Elles, we do not know how many, if any, would have been willing to state positively at what time during the conversations Morison made the statement for the last time. We do, of course, have the testimony of

55. "Report of the Proceedings of the United Associate Synod ... Cases ... James Morison," etc., p.30.

56. Ibid., pp.33,34.

57. Ibid., pp.54,55.

others that they understood that the probationer had retracted; but we believe it is better to leave it undetermined whether Mr Elles or Mr Morison made the more accurate statement.

Now occurred another event which brought upon James Morison the condemnation of his fellow-ministers in the Presbytery. It will be recalled that Morison, on the day of his ordination, promised to suppress the further circulation of the tract to which there had been considerable objection. Later before the Synod, he declared that he had yielded to this demand because the Presbytery had insisted on it. He declared that at the time he gave this promise he never dreamed that anyone would think the tract of so much consequence as to desire its republication. He soon discovered that the tract had been circulated all over the country, and that several people were purposing to republish it. Morison asserted that this threw his mind into great perplexity, for he did not see clearly whether or not it was his duty to prevent others from publishing the pamphlet. After much consideration, he came to the conclusion that he was keeping the strict letter of his pledge, although he did not hinder others from circulating his tract. Morison informed a friend in London who desired to publish the pamphlet that anyone who wished to publish the tract would not be prosecuted by civil pains and penalties. Morison admitted further that he lent copies of the tract to several candidates for communion; but he merely lent them, and in every case he told those who received them to return the pamphlets to him. He maintained that he did not feel culpable in doing this, for the doctrines contained in the tract were the doctrines which he was

preaching every day in the pulpit, in accordance with what he had expressly told the Presbytery that he could not, and would not, preach any other doctrines. In closing his remarks on this point, Morison said he would admit now, as he had done before the Presbytery, that he had erred in not taking measures to prevent the republication of the tract. He emphasized the fact that he had "erred", and had done "very far wrong".⁵⁸

There is only one other point which need be referred to concerning the suppression of the tract, and that is the assertion of the Rev. Mr Thomas that when Mr Morison had been previously asked if he knew anything about the republication of the pamphlet in London, seeing that it appeared advertised with his name, Morison answered that he did. When he was asked further if he had sanctioned its publication there, he declared in the strongest terms that he had refused his consent to its being republished. Thomas went on to say that if no further enquiries had been made, the Presbytery would have been left to conclude that Mr Morison "had been wronged by its being sent forth to the world in defiance of the prohibition which he had given". When another question was asked as to the terms of the answer which he returned, and whether there was anything in it about "pains and penalties", Morison acknowledged that there was, and that the entire answer which he gave was, "that though he could not consent to its re-publication, he would not visit any one who did so with pains and penalties."⁵⁹

The actions of young Morison both before and after his

58. "Report of the Proceedings of the United Associate Synod ... Cases ... James Morison," etc., p.31.

59. Ibid., pp.51,52.

ordination were certainly indiscreet, even from his own point of view. The suppression of the tract before his ordination, as Morison himself came to believe, brought no good, and in fact weakened his cause. The republication of the tract, even though not by Morison himself, was even worse in its results. It seems clear to us, moreover, that at his examination before the Presbytery Morison could not have presented his views so clearly as they appeared in his writings and discourses immediately after his ordination. Surely the members of Presbytery, who later so strenuously opposed these teachings, would not have had a part in the ordination of the young probationer if they heard his views presented as clearly on the day of his ordination as they came to know them later. It appears that Morison hid many of his views from the Presbytery behind vague language which permitted him later to proclaim the same opinions as before and still apparently stay within the letter of his pledge.

How are we to account for these unwise actions by a young man who loved his Lord so much, and who was in many ways an admirable man? We believe that his youth and inexperience will account for much of it. Furthermore, he had achieved outstanding success in bringing about a wave of religious enthusiasm, and he was eager to be ordained that he might continue the work to which he felt himself called. At the same time, he was convinced of the truth of the views which had brought such comfort to himself, and which had been instrumental in bringing about the revivals. No doubt the desire for a greater field of service as an ordained minister on the one hand, and the conviction that the views which he preached

were God's truth on the other, led him to perform some of the indiscreet acts of which he was guilty.

By no means do we condone young Morison's actions, and when his conduct is considered in connection with the views which he was propagating, we do not see how the Presbytery and Synod, in view of their Constitution, could have done otherwise than depose him from the ministry. We have merely attempted to offer some possible explanations of his actions, so that we, at this late date, might not too severely condemn him.

Adamson tells us that during the closing months of 1840 and the early months of the following year there was no meeting of the Presbytery at which the doctrines and actions of Mr Morison were not discussed. Suspicion continued to grow; and so a committee was appointed by the Presbytery to meet with the young minister and to discuss the controverted points with him. This committee met with him twice, but subsequent events make it clear that no progress was made. When the efforts of this committee, therefore, were deemed a failure, a small committee was appointed to formulate a series of charges against Morison.⁶⁰

Before the outstanding features of Morison's trial before the Presbytery of Kilmarnock are recounted, it should be noted that between his ordination and this his first trial Mr Morison published two more tracts. The first was a sermon on Mark 12:34, and was entitled, "Not Quite a Christian". The other was a sermon preached in November, 1840, and was published on the first day of January,

60. J. Adamson - "The Life of the Rev. James Morison, D.D.", pp. 112-114 (Summary).

1841. It was given the title, "The Nature of the Atonement". This tract embodies the Grotian or governmental theory of the atonement.

The Kilmarnock Presbytery fixed March 2, 1841, as the day of the trial of James Morison; and so on that day a large crowd gathered in the Clerk's Lane Church to witness the proceedings.⁶¹ The congregation of Clerk's Lane Church had already decided to adhere to their pastor notwithstanding any action which the Presbytery might take against him.⁶² The presbyterial committee which had been appointed brought in its report in which Morison was charged with teaching and still maintaining -

"First, that the object of saving faith to any person is the statement that Christ made atonement for the sins of that person, as he made atonement for the sins of the whole world; and that the seeing of this statement to be true is saving faith, and gives the assurance of salvation;

"Second charge, that all men were able of themselves to believe the gospel unto salvation, or, in other words, to put away unbelief, the only obstacle to salvation which the atonement has not removed;

"Third charge, that no person ought to be directed to pray for grace to help him to believe, even though he be an 'anxious sinner', and that no person's prayers could be of any avail till he believed unto salvation;

"Fourth charge, that repentance in Scripture meant only a change of mind, and was not godly sorrow for sin;

"Fifth charge, that justification is not pardon, but that it is implied in pardon - that God

61. F. Ferguson - "A History of the Evangelical Union," p.52.

62. W. Adamson - Op. cit., p.119.

pardons only in his character of Father, and justifies only in his character of Judge - that justification is not the expression of the fatherly favour of God;

"Sixth charge, that election comes in the order of nature after the atonement (explained by Mr M. as meaning only that it comes after the purpose of atonement), and other expressions which militate against the harmony of doctrine respecting the purposes of God, set forth in the standards under the notion of a covenant of grace. For example, 'God's purpose in the atonement was merely to bring it within the power of all to be saved'; and 'notwithstanding election, it is in the power of those who are not elected to be saved';

"Seventh charge, there are in Mr Morison's publications many expressions unscriptural, unwarrantable, and calculated to depreciate the atonement - for example, that it is a 'talismanic something'; 'that Jesus could not so suffer the consequences of sin as to liberate us from deserving punishment'; and 'that the atonement of Christ has not secured the removal of the obstacles to salvation that are within sinners elected unto eternal life';

"Eighth charge, in consequence of its having been reported that Mr M. had spoken in the pulpit in a way which led some to believe that he denied the imputation of the guilt of Adam's first sin to his posterity, he was asked by the committee what were his views on this subject, and it was found that he was not prepared to say that all men by nature are deserving of the punishment of death, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, on account of Adam's first sin; and could not give a definite answer to the question, whether we were guilty in consequence of Adam's first sin, or deserved on its account to suffer punishment, except the words guilt and desert should be explained."⁶³

Morison was also charged with disingenuous conduct. The instances which were given were his suppression of the tract before his

63. "Charges brought against the Rev. James Morison," pp.3-16.

ordination, his failure to do all within his power to suppress it after his ordination, and his failure to restrain himself from teaching and publishing the doctrines to which there had been objections.⁶⁴ We have dealt with each of these earlier in this chapter.

A notable omission in the charges is that of holding and teaching the universality of the atonement; and yet it was the question of the atonement which was the great matter in dispute.⁶⁵ This omission is to be accounted for no doubt by the fact that there was no unanimity of opinion among the members of the committee, and also among the ministers of the Secession Church as a whole.⁶⁶

After Morison had made a long speech in which he did not deny but defended the doctrines which were charged against him, and he had given the explanations of his conduct with which we have already dealt, the members of the court gave their opinions.⁶⁷ At length, shortly before midnight, the Rev. James Elles of Saltcoats moved - "That the Presbytery admonish Mr Morison and suspend him from the exercise of his ministry and the fellowship of the Church, aye and until he shall retract his errors and express his sorrow for the offence given to the brethren in the Church by the propa-

64. "Charges Brought Against the Rev. James Morison," p.18.

65. Robertson - "History of the Atonement Controversy," p.163; F. Ferguson - Op. cit., p.117; and "Report of Proceedings in the United Associate Synod ... Cases ... James Morison," etc., p.56.

66. W. Adamson - Op. cit., p.132. See also opinions of members of Synod in "Report of Proceedings of United Associate Synod ... Cases ... James Morison," etc.

67. F. Ferguson - Op. cit., pp.72 and 79.

gation of these errors."⁶⁸ This was made the finding of the Presbytery. When Mr Morison had tabled his protest and dissent, and had appealed to the Synod, the anger of the crowd at the decision of the Presbytery manifested itself, and for a time there was a considerable uproar.⁶⁹

Between the trial by the Presbytery and that of the Synod, there occurred two interesting events in the life of James Morison. The first of these was his marriage to Miss Margaret Dick in April of 1841, and the other was the publication of his important little brochure, "The Extent of the Atonement", a week before his trial by the Synod. Smeaton says that at this time Morison refused to allow himself to be called an Arminian, but in the opinion of Smeaton the arguments of Arminius are in some cases the strength of this tractate.⁷⁰

On June 8, 1841, the Synod of the United Secession Church met in Glasgow to hear the appeal of the Rev. James Morison. A great deal of interest was manifested in the case.⁷¹ The Presbytery and Morison were heard at length, and then the members of the Synod spoke.⁷² Drs Mitchell, Balmer, and Brown, of the Divinity Hall, were of the opinion that the trouble was merely one of crude

68. O. Smeaton - "Principal James Morison," p.106.

69. O. Smeaton - Op. cit., pp.106-107; A. M'Kay - "The History of Kilmarnock," p.146; and J. Walker - "Reminiscences of Dr Morison's Early Ministry in Kilmarnock" ("Evangelical Repository," 9th Series, Vol.II., No.12, Sept., 1887, p. 329).

70. O. Smeaton - Op. cit., pp.111-114 (Summary).

71. O. Smeaton - Op. cit., p.115.

72. "Report of the Proceedings of the United Associate Synod ... Cases ... James Morison," etc. (Summary).

language, but they all affirmed that the misconduct with which Morison was charged could not be justified.⁷³ Dr Brown especially did all that he could to aid young Morison, but his efforts really did more harm than good,⁷⁴ for in the minds of many the efforts of Brown confirmed the suspicion that the present trouble had had its origin in the Divinity Hall;⁷⁵ and it led to the libelling of Dr Brown at a later time. Finally, a motion made by Dr Heugh was agreed upon. The motion stood as follows:-

"The Synod, without sanctioning every thing in the papers and pleadings, approve of the diligence and fidelity of the presbytery of Kilmarnock - dismiss the appeal on account of the erroneous and inconsistent opinions set forth by Mr Morison, and his blameable conduct in regard to the suppression of his tract - continue his suspension - and appoint a committee to deal with Mr Morison, and to report to the Synod on Thursday morning first at farthest." ⁷⁶

Against this finding, James Morison protested, and from it his father, the Rev. Robert Morison, and the Rev. John Guthrie dissented.⁷⁷ The Rev. Dr John Brown also dissented, but he did not insist on the insertion of his reasons in the minutes.⁷⁸

Morison met with the committee, but no change was produced in the young man's sentiments; so the committee decided to meet with him again on the following Monday afternoon.⁷⁹ Mr Morison

73. "Report of the Proceedings of the United Associate Synod ... Cases ... James Morison," etc., pp.71,72, and 78-80.

74. O. Smeaton - Op. cit., p.119.

75. W. Adamson - Op. cit., p.193.

76. "Report of the Proceedings of the United Associate Synod ... Cases ... James Morison," etc., p.86.

77. Ibid., p.86.

78. A. Robertson - "History of the Atonement Controversy," p.164.

79. "Report of the Proceedings of the United Associate Synod ... Cases ... James Morison," etc., pp.87,88.

returned home; and on the advice of a majority of his session, he disregarded the sentence of the Synod and preached and conducted the communion service the next day. When the committee learned from a letter from Morison that he had done these things in defiance of the Synod, they recommended that he be declared no longer a minister of the United Secession Church. The Synod adopted this recommendation and directed its ministers not to preach for him, and not to employ him in any of their public ministrations.⁸⁰

The vast majority of the people of Clerk's Lane Church adhered to Morison, and he continued his ministerial labours with enthusiasm. He seemed indefatigable in his preparation, preaching in his church, pastoral work, instruction classes, special services, and writing. From early morning until late at night he was kept busy. Many of the special services were conducted in the open air. His own people and many in the surrounding country came to love him because of his kind ministrations.⁸¹

There were many who believed that the moderate Calvinistic position which was held by Mr Morison at the time of his deposition and for some time thereafter was an exceedingly inconsistent one. Among these were a small group of people in Glasgow who thought that he should give up his Calvinistic views altogether. They sent a deputation to Kilmarnock, therefore, to consult with Morison. The conference continued for a long time, but finally

80. "Report of the Proceedings of the United Associate Synod ... Cases ... James Morison," etc., p.88.

81. W. Adamson - "The Life of the Rev. James Morison, D.D.", pp. 207 ff.

Mr Morison declared that with his present light he could not become an Arminian.⁸² Others, including his father, began to press upon Morison the inconsistency of his position, and he began to give it more thought.⁸³ After a time, he became convinced that he must give up his belief in unconditional election and irresistible grace if his theological position was to be consistent and defensible.⁸⁴ This change came in 1843, and it will be recalled that it was in the edition of the tract, "The Question, 'What Must I Do to be Saved?' Answered", which was published in the following year from which the paragraph on election was first deleted.

Between the deposition of James Morison and May 10, 1843, Robert Morison, A. C. Rutherford, and John Guthrie were also deposed from the ministry of the United Secession Church "for holding views subversive of the special reference of the atonement".⁸⁵ These three expelled ministers met with James Morison in Kilmarnock from May the sixteenth to eighteenth, and the "Evangelical Union" was founded. At this meeting were also present representatives of the Clerk's Lane Church and of the churches of which Robert Morison and Rutherford were the pastors. James Morison produced and read the draft of a doctrinal basis or statement of principles; and after some emendation, this was adopted. It was not the original intention of the founders that the Evangelical Union should

82. W. Adamson - "The Life of the Rev. James Morison, D.D.", pp. 215-216.

83. Ibid., pp.234 ff.; and F. Ferguson - "A History of the Evangelical Union," pp.195-196.

84. W. Adamson - Op. cit., pp.235-236.

85. A. Robertson - "History of the Atonement Controversy," p.174.

be a new denomination, but only that it should be a voluntary society for promoting evangelistic work. It is interesting to note that in the "Statement of Principles" which was adopted a distinct and consistent deliverance on the universality of the influences of the Holy Spirit is given for the first time by these men.⁸⁶ The cardinal doctrines of this statement may be summed up in what the Morisonians themselves came to call the "three glorious universalities":⁸⁷ "the love of God the Father in the gift and sacrifice of Jesus to all men everywhere without distinction, exception, or respect of persons. The love of God the Son, in the gift and sacrifice of himself as a true propitiation for the sins of the world. The love of God the Holy Spirit in his personal and continuous work of applying to the souls of all men the provisions of Divine Grace."⁸⁸ Warfield, in commenting on these "three universalities" in his book, "The Plan of Salvation", declares that "perhaps the essential universalistic note of the whole Arminian construction never received a stronger assertion than in the creed of the Evangelical Union body."⁸⁹

It was agreed also at this meeting to establish a theological seminary at Kilmarnock under the direction of James Morison.⁹⁰

86. "Evangelical Union; Its Origin, and a Statement of Its Principles," pp.2-10 (Summary).

87. J. Morison - "Apology for Those Evangelical Doctrines which Maintain and Establish the Freeness of the Grace of God to All," p.2 (Art. in "The Evangelical Repository", 3rd Series, Vol. I, No.1, Sept. 1862).

88. H. Henderson - "The Religious Controversies of Scotland," p. 187.

89. Page 99.

90. "Evangelical Union; Its Origin," etc., p.3.

The first session of eight weeks began in August, 1843, when four public students, several laymen, and two private students attended the lectures.⁹¹ To the second session of the Evangelical Union Academy, the four former pupils returned, and in addition there were some new students who had been expelled from the Glasgow Theological Academy of the Congregational Union because of heretical opinions. There were nine of them who had been influenced by the Morisonian controversy, and those who had not finished their training at the time of their expulsion entered the Evangelical Union Academy.⁹²

It was discovered also that some of the ministers of the Congregational Church in Scotland sympathized with the expelled students, and shared with them their opinions. After an extensive correspondence, the Congregational Churches of Glasgow withdrew from fellowship with five neighbouring churches.⁹³ These five churches began at once to co-operate with the Evangelical Union; and after a short time, they became members of it.⁹⁴

In 1851 Mr Morison accepted a call to a church in Glasgow; but while he was still in Kilmarnock he published a number of works. The most outstanding of these was "An Exposition of the Ninth Chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans" which appeared in 1849. Of this production, Adamson has remarked that it "is of

91. F. Ferguson - "A History of the Evangelical Union," pp.270-272.

92. Adamson - "The Life of the Rev. James Morison, D.D.", p.253; and W. L. Alexander - "Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Ralph Wardlaw, D.D.", pp.421-423.

93. W. L. Alexander - Op. cit., pp.423-424.

94. O. Smeaton - "Principal James Morison," p.156.

historic importance, as the first learned and systematic attempt made by a Scotsman to prove by elaborate and scholarly exposition that the Calvinistic creed held by the Presbyterian churches ... had no support from the Apostle of the Gentiles, in what was thought by them to be the scriptural warrant for their system."⁹⁵

In the years which followed, Morison continued his writing; and he became well-known as the author of scholarly commentaries. Between the years 1866 and 1888, he published commentaries on Matthew, Mark, the third chapter of Romans, the sixth chapter of Romans, Ruth, and a revised edition of his exposition on the ninth chapter of Romans, together with an exposition of the tenth chapter of that book. For fifteen years, beginning in 1854, Morison was also the editor of the "Evangelical Repository".⁹⁶

We have noticed earlier in this brief sketch of the life of Mr Morison that as a young man he was an advocate of total abstinence from intoxicating drinks. Chiefly through the personal influence of Morison, all of the ministers and students of the Evangelical Union espoused the temperance cause, and the churches individually came to the conclusion to admit no licensed dealers in intoxicants into their membership. Not all of the members of the Evangelical Union were abstainers, but a large number of them were.⁹⁷ When the prohibition of the sale of intoxicating liquors was first advocated in Scotland, Morison, after giving the matter considerable

95. W. Adamson - Op. cit., p.285.

96. Ibid., 313,314,358-361,369-371,386-387,397,399.

97. Ibid., 308, and "Evangelical Union, Jubilee Conference Memorial Volume," p.32.

study, declared himself in favour of the principle of prohibition.⁹⁸

In the spring of 1852, Mr Morison had a severe illness which was the precursor of the physical weakness from which he ever afterwards suffered.⁹⁹ He continued to do a tremendous amount of work, but by 1855 it was apparent that a long rest was needed. In that year, therefore, he made an extended tour of the Continent and Palestine.¹⁰⁰

From about the year 1862 on, it was noticed that there was a change of attitude toward Mr Morison and the Evangelical Union. There had come a change in the theological outlook of Scotland, and it was a change in the direction of the position advocated by Morison more than twenty years before. Open antagonism towards the Morisonians virtually ceased. Thus it came about that representatives of many Protestant churches and of many countries joined in celebrating in October, 1889, the jubilee of Mr Morison's ordination to the ministry.¹⁰¹ It is also noteworthy that Adrian College, in the United States of America, conferred the degree of Doctor of Divinity on Mr Morison in 1862, and that in 1880 a similar honour was bestowed on him by Glasgow University.¹⁰²

In 1874 Dr Morison visited America, and attended the General Assembly of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church which held doctrines similar to those of the Evangelical Union of Scotland.¹⁰³ He

98. W. Adamson - "The Life of the Rev. James Morison, D.D.," p.309.

99. Ibid., p.307.

100. Ibid., pp.317 ff.

101. "Memorial Volume ... Ministerial Jubilee ... Principal Morison."

102. W. Adamson - Op. cit., pp.350,387.

103. Ibid., p.373.

resigned his professorship in 1876, and was appointed principal of the Theological Hall which now had four teachers. In 1878 he returned to his professorship, but in 1884 he resigned his pastorate. From about 1891, Dr Morison dwelt in comparative retirement. During these closing years of his life he received many indications of appreciation of his work.¹⁰⁴ He took ill on Tuesday, November 7, 1893, and died on the following Monday at the age of seventy-seven.¹⁰⁵

104. W. Adamson - Op. cit. pp.372,382,385,388,412,414,417.
105. O. Smeaton - "Principal James Morison," p.225.

CHAPTER TWO.

A SYSTEMATIC STATEMENT OF
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James Morison never gave a systematic statement of his theological position. At one time, he began to draw up a "System of Theology", but he did not complete more than the "Prolegomena" of this.¹ Of his published works, his "Gospel Catechism for Children" comes nearest to being a systematic presentation of his opinions, but this is by no means an adequate statement of his views. In this chapter, therefore, a brief statement of the theology of Morison will be given. The materials for this have been gathered from many of his writings, and they will be arranged, in large measure, according to the order which Morison uses in the "Gospel Catechism" referred to above. Special attention will be given, of course, to the distinctive features of Morison's teaching.

Part One.The Rule of Faith.

It is the teaching of Morison that God has made himself known in the works of nature; but He has revealed himself more especially

1. O. Smeaton - "Principal James Morison," pp.187,188.

and fully in the Bible, which is the book of God.² Morison has a high view of the authority of the Scriptures, recognizing in them the only standard book worthy of subscription.³ It is the desire of Morison to bow before the entire Word of God; and to embrace whatever the Bible teaches. All doctrine is to be tested by "a strict and bona fide exegesis of 'what saith the Lord'".⁴

The Bible is defined as "that holy volume which consists of the Old and New Testaments; the Old Testament beginning with the book of Genesis, and ending with the book of Malachi; and the New Testament beginning with the gospel of Matthew, and ending with the revelation of John; the whole volume being written by holy men of old, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."⁵ The divine origin of the Bible is attested by the sublimity of its truths, the power of these truths in converting sinners from the error of their ways, the fulfilment of prophecy, and the miracles which are recorded in the Scriptures and which have been testified to by well-qualified witnesses.⁶ To doubt the divine origin of the Bible is more foolish than to question the best attested facts of ancient history.⁷

2. J.M. (Throughout the remaining pages of this thesis the initials "J.M." will be used to indicate "James Morison".) - "Apology for Those Evangelical Doctrines," ("The Evangelical Repository," 3rd Series, Vol.I, No.1, Sept. 1862) p.21; "Sheaves of Ministry," pp.196,197; "Gospel Catechism," Q.7, p.22.

3. "Evangelical Union; Its Origin," etc. (The "Statement of Principles" contained in this is the work of James Morison), p.6.

4. J.M. - "Apology for Those Evangelical Doctrines," etc., p.19. (See bibliography)

5. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.142, pp.168,169.

6. Ibid., Qs.10-12, pp.25-27.

7. Ibid., Q.13, p.27.

It is interesting to note here, however, that Morison does not mention the Reformers' doctrine of the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit as convincing men of the divine origin of the Bible.

The inspiration of the Bible is not merely the "inspiration of a lofty ethical aim". Its inspiration is of a still higher kind. There was a special activity of the divine Spirit in moving holy men of old to speak or to write "the grand things that have to do with the Gospel and our highest weal and bliss".⁸ Smeaton quotes a statement of Dr Morison's sister on Morison's view of inspiration: "My brother was a firm believer in the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, and I feel sure would have been opposed to anything that would have tended to detract from their acceptance as the Word of God."⁹

Part Two.

Theology Proper.

The Nature of God.

Morison holds that all the Infinites must be modes of one Absolute Infinity.¹⁰ There is only one God,¹¹ for the substitution of the word "gods" for "God" annihilates the idea of Godhead. To make such a substitution is to descend from the infinite to the finite.¹² The following is the definition which Morison gives

8. J.M. - "Sheves of Ministry," p.189.

9. O. Smeaton - "Principal James Morison," p.236.

10. J.M. - "A Practical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark," p.340.

11. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.39, p.45.

12. J.M. - "A ... Commentary on ... Mark," p.340.

of God: "God tells us in the Bible that he is a Spirit; everywhere present; from everlasting to everlasting in existence; infinite in power; unlimited in knowledge; and of such unfathomable wisdom, spotless justice, abounding goodness, and unchanging truthfulness, that he is 'glorious in holiness', and most worthily denominated 'Light' and 'Love'." ¹³

God is a Spirit. - We know nothing positive about the substance of God; so we can merely say what it is not. It has no bodily parts, so it cannot be seen, heard, or handled. It is possible to know much about the character of God; but in the present state of things, it is not possible to know anything about His essential nature. ¹⁴

Omnipresence. - Morison quotes Psalm 139:7 to prove that God is everywhere present: "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there; if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." ¹⁵

Eternity. - To prove that God is from everlasting to everlasting in existence, Psalm 90:2 is quoted: "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God." Morison points out that since God is from everlasting to everlasting, He is a

13. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.15, p.28.

14. Ibid., Qs.16-17 and Note 11, pp.28,29.

15. Ibid., Q.18, p.30.

necessary being. If God had not existed from all eternity, He must have begun to be; and if He had begun to be, He must have been a creature, and not the great Creator of all creatures.¹⁶

Omnipotence. - "All that man can think as possible is possible with God. All that does not involve a contradiction in thought is possible with God."¹⁷

Knowledge. - Hebrews 4:13 is given in "A Gospel Catechism" as proof that God is unlimited in knowledge: "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."¹⁸ The knowledge of God is perfect and unchangeable, incapable alike of error or increase. It comprehends all events, past, present, and to come, and all in their true nature and relations. All space and time lie equally open for His inspection; His omniscient eye ranges from eternity to eternity, and embraces all events, minute as well as momentous.¹⁹ How it is possible for God to foreknow free events, Morison does not feel bound to declare. The fact is that He does, and yet His foreknowledge "does not interfere with man's free agency or prove the events foreknown to be necessary."²⁰

Wisdom. - The Bible, in Romans 11:33, ascribes to God unfathomable wisdom: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways

16. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.19 and Note 13, pp.30,31.

17. J.M. - "A ... Commentary on ... Mark," pp.289,290.

18. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.21, p.32.

19. J.M. - "Divine Foreknowledge," Art. in "The Evangelical Repository," Vol.I, No.2, Dec. 1854, p.116.

20. Ibid., p.121.

past finding out." Wisdom consists in using the best means to attain the best ends. It involves the choosing of a good end, and the application of good means in order to attain it.²¹

The Will of God. - The expression "the will of God" is used in two distinct and indeed very different significations. It is used in one sense to denote what God may do; and it is used in the other to denote what He wills His moral creatures to do. In the former case, it means His decreeing or purposing will. In the latter, it means His preceptive or mandatory will. These two wills, though never at variance with one another, are entirely distinct. The decreeing will of God is never resisted; He always and everywhere does all His pleasure, as far as His own doing is concerned. God has by no means decreed everything which comes to pass, but we shall say more of that later. The preceptive will of God has reference to what His moral creatures ought to do. "It is, in short, his moral law."²²

The Justice of God. - The justice of God is spotless;²³ and because God is just, sin must be punished.²⁴ It is clear from the writings of Morison, however, that the attribute of justice in God which must be satisfied is not distributive justice. Morison quotes approvingly the statement of Stillingfleet that God's justice as a moral governor is "but his goodness directed by wisdom".²⁵

21. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.23 and Note 16, p.33.

22. J.M. - "The Will of God," art. in "The Evangelical Repository," 1st Series, Vol.IV, No.16, 1858, pp.286,287,289.

23. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.24, p.34.

24. J.M. - "The Question, 'What Must I Do to be Saved?' Answered," p.4 (1845 edit.).

25. J.M. - "The Nature of the Propitiation," pp.23,24. (All of the references to this work are to the 1843 edition.)

After remarking that God must punish sins because He is just, Morison continues, "Were he not to punish your sins, he would stain his own character as the Moral Governor of the universe, and for ever cut the sinews, and annihilate the efficiency of his laws. Surely you would not wish to be saved at the expense of God's glory, and of the well-being of his great moral empire! God is not merely your Father; he is also your Governor and Judge. A father may forgive the offences of his children, but a governor and judge must be just, and punish the wilful transgressions of his subjects. Were he not thus to vindicate his laws when broken, they would have no moral power to restrain crime, his subjects would cease to be subject, and his government over them would be turned into their own government, or rather mis-government of themselves Your sins, then, O sinner, must be punished."²⁶ We shall say a great deal more on this subject when we consider in the next chapter the necessity of the atonement, but enough has been said to make it clear that the justice of God for Morison is merely a form of benevolence. Even in punishing God is exercising His goodness toward the race in general, for by so doing He is preserving His rule over His creatures, and the maintenance of this rule is best for their welfare. In other words, there is nothing in the nature of God which demands the punishment of sin; it is only because of His relation to the moral universe that God must mete out punishment.

Goodness. - Exodus 34:6 is quoted by Morison to show that

26. J.M. - "The Question, 'What Must I Do to be Saved?' Answered," pp.4,5 (1845 edit.)

abounding goodness is to be ascribed to God: "The Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth."²⁷

"Goodness, moral and spiritual," says Morison, "is Divine. Absolute goodness and God are one. God is impersonated goodness, just as He is impersonated love. Primarily, essentially, independently, none is good but God. When goodness is found in a creature, it is just a reflection of the moral goodness of the Creator; it is godlikeness."²⁸

Benevolence. - God's character is expressed in "Infinite Benevolence". All of the moral attributes of God are but manifestations of His infinite benevolence. As we have seen already, it is the teaching of Morison, that justice is God's benevolence toward His whole empire, displaying itself in the securing of the interests of the great whole at the expense of those who have made "pests" of themselves in the universe. The grace of God is His benevolence toward the undeserving; His anger is His benevolence wounded. The wisdom of God, too, is just His infinite benevolence directing His infinite power, and directed by His infinite knowledge. The holiness of God is summed up in one word, "LOVE".²⁹ It is utterly beyond the power of any creature to show wherein God could have acted more wisely, more holily, more benevolently.³⁰

Love. - Again and again the love of God is emphasized in the writings of James Morison. The idea that "God is love" is met

27. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.25, p.35.

28. J.M. - "A ... Commentary on ... Mark," p.283.

29. "Evangelical Union; Its Origin," etc., p.7.

30. J.M. - "Sheaves of Ministry," p.255.

repeatedly. The love of God is described in "Doctrinal Declaration by the Conference of the Evangelical Union" as free, sovereign, and unbought, and as being of "such unparalleled intensity as to embody itself in the unspeakable gift and sacrifice of His own Divine and well-beloved Son." It is a love which embraces all mankind, of every age and land, without distinction, without exception, and without respect of persons.³¹ Though He is "Love", God can be angry with his disobedient subject, and this anger may lead him to punish them. There is, however, no passion, no malignity, no vindictiveness in the anger of God. His anger is a principle which has existence only in reference to his rectoral relation.³²

Truth. - The unchanging truthfulness of God is proven to be Scriptural by the quotation of a few words from Hebrews 6:18: "It is 'impossible for God to lie'."³³

Holiness. - God is glorious in holiness, as is shown by Exodus 15:11: "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like unto thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"³⁴

Light. - In I John 1:5, God is denominated Light: "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." Light is one of the finest emblems of purity.³⁵

31. "Doctrinal Declaration by the Conference of the Evangelical Union," pp.7,8. (James Morison was not the author of this "Declaration", but he approved of it and he vigorously defended it in "Apology for Those Evangelical Doctrines which Maintain and Establish the Freeness of the Grace of God to All". (See bibliography)

32. J.M. - "The Nature of the Propitiation," p.26.

33. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.26, p.35.

34. Ibid., Q.27, pp.37,38.

35. Ibid., Q.28 and Note 21, p.38.

The Trinity.

There is only one God, but a "three-oneness" in the Godhead has been revealed to us. God is both Three and One.³⁶ It must be admitted that there is a verbal contradiction in affirming of the one God a trinity of persons and agencies; but the Scriptures make it clear, that in the divine nature there is a plurality of some sort, as the foundation of the threefold offices, relations, and works ascribed to the one God. At this point, however, we reach our limits; "the mysterious unknown forbids us to penetrate its vast domain."³⁷ The Scriptures reveal to us that there are in the Godhead three "Subsistents", the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, "who are all equally omnipresent, equally eternal, equally omnipotent, equally omniscient, equally wise, equally just, equally good, equally true, and equally glorious."³⁸

Of the divinity of Christ, Morison has much to say. He declares that from all eternity Christ was "God", "the true God", "the mighty God", "God over all", and "God 'equal' with the Father". The eternal generation of Christ is said to be unscriptural, for, in the opinion of Morison, it makes the divine nature of Christ a derived nature, and in this way the Saviour becomes dependent on and inferior to the Father, and is not supremely divine. While thus carefully guarding the doctrine of the divinity of our Lord, Morison, as we have seen in Chapter One, denies the eternal sonship of Christ. It is the belief of Morison that Christ became the Son

36. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Note 23, p.40.

37. J.M. - "The Holy Spirit a Personal Divine Agent," etc., Art. in "The Evangelical Repository," Vol.II, No.6, Dec. 1855, p.97.

38. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.31, pp.39,40.

of God "when he was begotten in the womb of the Virgin Mary".³⁹

The personality and deity of the Holy Spirit are unequivocally affirmed. The denial of either of these is declared to be unscriptural. "The Personality of the Holy Spirit is proved by those passages of Scripture which ascribe personal feelings and actions to Him ... If his personality be admitted, so that he shall not be considered as a mere influence or emanation of power, then his Divinity cannot reasonably be called into question."⁴⁰

Foreordination.

Morison says that no philosopher or theologian has maintained a theory of "no foreordination". No man who thinks will hold that God foreordains nothing which comes to pass, for if God be God, and consequently rational and wise, He will not bring anything to pass without forming a plan. It is characteristic of the wise never to act without a plan, and God is infinitely wise. It is only a question as to whether God's foreordination is universal or limited.⁴¹

A limited foreordination is accepted by Morison. He gives the following definition: "The decrees of God are his eternal purposes, according to the counsel of His own will, whereby, for His own glory, and for the widest possible diffusion of blessedness beyond Himself, He hath foreordained whatsoever HE BRINGS TO PASS."⁴²

39. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Note 64, pp.109-111.

40. Ibid., Note 26, p.43; J.M. - "Apology for Those Evangelical Doctrines," etc., p.7 (See note 2); J.M. - "The Holy Spirit a Personal Divine Agent," etc., pp.90-98. (See bibliography)

41. J.M. - "Sheaves of Ministry," pp.149,162.

42. Ibid., p.163.

God has not foreordained the acts of those creatures who are moral and responsible agents; but all of the acts of God in time were preceded by intent and design before time, that is, by eternal foreordination.⁴³ This limited foreordination of God is based on the perfections of His nature and His foreknowledge.⁴⁴

Morison makes a bitter attack on the Calvinistic doctrine of a universal foreordination. He says that if this doctrine is true there cannot be any such thing as theological error in the Church or in an individual, for if God has foreordained everything, He has foreordained what men call error. But if this is true, God is the deviser and inventor of the error. As the creature of God, however, error must be good, and, therefore, not error. In like manner, it is not possible for any man to preach or to believe dangerous doctrines; but even if it is possible to do these things, the doing of them cannot be dangerous, for the doctrines of men cannot alter the decrees of God.⁴⁵ The doctrine of universal foreordination, moreover, is subversive of all morality and religion, for it takes away all feeling of responsibility.⁴⁶ If this doctrine is true, it is strange that all men should be constrained to act as if they were free. Free, of course, they cannot be if all things are fixed by God's decrees.⁴⁷ If everything which comes to pass has been foreordained by God, He is the only proper agent in the

43. J.M. - "Sheves of Ministry," p.162.

44. J.M. - "A Gospel Alphabet," p.74.

45. J.M. - "Sheves of Ministry," pp.152,153.

46. "Doctrinal Declaration by the Conference of the Evangelical Union," p.6; and J.M. - "Sheves of Ministry," pp.154,155.

47. J.M. - "Sheves of Ministry," p.155.

universe, He is the only real cause.⁴⁸ The doctrine, thus, makes God the only sinner.⁴⁹ In the "Doctrinal Declaration by the Conference of the Evangelical Union", it is said that, notwithstanding the caveat that the doctrine of universal foreordination is not so held by those who adhere to the "Westminster Confession" "as to make God the author of sin, it does, if held at all, make God the author of sin, the prime author, and, properly speaking, the only author. The mitigating distinction advanced by some between direct ordination and efficacious permission, is a distinction without a difference, or with such difference only as is altogether devoid of doctrinal significance. The foreordination in either case is alike absolute and universal, and is therefore such as to inwreath all events into one adamant chain of necessity."⁵⁰

To the objection that universal foreknowledge necessitates all events as truly as does universal foreordination, it is answered that "to know is an act or state of the intelligence, and never necessitates its object; and for God to know a crime, say the crucifixion of Christ, before it comes to pass, no more identifies him with it, than our knowledge of it after it has come to pass makes us sharers in its criminality."⁵¹

Creation.

In a sermon appearing in "Sheves of Ministry", Morison deals with the creation of the universe. He considers the first chapter

48. J.M. - "The Will of God," p.287. (See bibliography)

49. J.M. - "Sheves of Ministry," p.157.

50. Page 6.

51. Ibid., p.6.

of Genesis, which he calls the "story of creation". This chapter is not to be thought of as "a chronological history of the various steps and stages of creation". The rocks which constitute the crust of the earth are like leaves of the great book of Nature; and traces of the operation of a law of progression and evolution are manifest and manifold on every page of that great volume. It is in this book of Nature, and not in the first chapter of Genesis, that the chronological history of creation is to be found. Nor does this chapter of Genesis contain a scientific analysis of the process of creation. "Most assuredly," writes Morison, "it does not hand over to us a cut-and-dry scientific analysis of the process of creation, either in the domain of the universe in general, or in the sphere of our own little world in particular."⁵²

There are a number of lessons which Morison finds in this opening chapter of Genesis. The first is that the whole story assumes, and does not attempt to demonstrate, the existence of the great First Cause. "The existence of God," writes Morison, "is demonstrable. But it is not here demonstrated. The works of creation demonstrate it; but it is not the "story" of the works of creation that is the demonstration."⁵³ The story also tells us that God is the Maker of the universe. Another lesson is that the universe is not eternal. "The universe began to be No man knows when it will reach its goal." A final lesson to be learned from this passage is that the universe and all of the creatures that are in it belong to God. He "is the universal proprietor, because He is the

52. Pages 189,190 (Summary).

53. J.M. - "Sheves of Ministry," pp.196,197.

single Creator."⁵⁴

Providence

Preservation

Man is a finite, limited and dependent agent who can do nothing without the sustaining power of God.⁵⁵ As Creator and Preserver, God gives to men, and subsequently sustains, their being and all their powers.⁵⁶ In sustaining His creatures, however, God in no way curtails their liberty, and, furthermore, He is in no way implicated in the specific use which they make of the gifts that are bestowed upon them.⁵⁷

From what has been said, it may be inferred that, in Morison's view, all of the lower animals and inanimate objects, as finite, limited, and dependent beings, are also sustained by the power of God.

Government

Adamson quotes a letter written in the autumn of 1841 by James Morison to his father. The latter was preparing for publication a defence of unconditional, eternal, and personal election; and in this work he planned to deal with the impossibility of reconciling man's free agency with God's direct influence and irresistible government. James Morison, in the letter referred to above, says

54. J.M. - "Sheaves of Ministry," pp.197,198 (Summary).

55. J.M. - "Divine Providence in Its Relation to Sin," Art. in "The Evangelical Repository," Vol.I, No.4, June, 1855, p.269.

56. Ibid., p.273.

57. Ibid., p.269.

that he cannot agree that there is any difficulty in reconciling the two doctrines. He writes, "The supposed difficulty seems to me to arise from the old view ... that God has a hand in everything that comes to pass. Now in reference to God's government over all irresponsible creatures, there can be no doubt that all that happens is caused by His direct agency. The case, however, seems to me to be very different with accountable beings. God sustains their faculties in existence, but as to their moral operation He exercises no immediate control over them. He is the author of all that is morally good in them, by influencing them through the medium of the truth, but in no sense at all has He anything to do with their evil thoughts. If this be the case, I see no difficulty at all in accounting for man's responsibility, or reconciling it with God's agency. As to God's irresistible government over moral beings, I see none of it. It is resisted every day."⁵⁸

Similar statements are to be found in two articles by Morison in "The Evangelical Repository": "The Divine Moral Government" (Vol. I, No.1, Sept., 1854); and "Divine Providence in Its Relation to Sin" (Vol.I, No.IV., June, 1855).

Miracles.

There can be no doubt that James Morison believed in miracles;⁵⁹ but, as far as we have been able to discover, he has not given a formal definition of a "miracle". He does speak of

58. W. Adamson - "The Life of the Rev. James Morison, D.D.," pp. 214,215.

59. J.M. - "A ... Commentary on ... Mark," p.211; "Commentary on Matthew's Gospel," p.167; and in many other places in these commentaries.

them, however, as "supernatural" and as produced by God.⁶⁰ In "A Gospel Catechism", Morison says that it is best for parents to try to convey to children an idea of what miracles are by giving them examples.⁶¹

There has been a great deal of controversy from time to time concerning the value of miracles as evidence of the divine origin of the Bible. On this point, Morison takes a position which is contrary to the general attitude to-day. He holds that miracles were wrought by God to prove that the doctrines of the Bible were not from men, but from Himself.⁶² Morison tells us that these miracles, which are recorded in the Bible, have been testified to by eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses, who could not be deceived themselves, and who had no inducement to deceive others.⁶³

Angels

In our language, the word "angel" is used almost exclusively to designate those superior beings, whom God frequently employs in the government of the world. They are "spirits", and, therefore, invisible to us. Those of them that are holy wait upon God; and while Jesus was here upon earth, they served Him. There are also many other activities in which they engage. They minister to holy men and women; they take an interest in the gospel; they rejoice when sinners are converted; and they convey departed saints into heaven.⁶⁴

60. J.M. - "Commentary on Matthew's Gospel," p.15.

61. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Note 6, p.25.

62. Ibid., Q.12, pp.26,27.

63. Ibid., Q.12, pp.26,27.

64. Ibid., Note 59, p.103.

There are also wicked angels who rebelled against God; and so God has left them to endure forever the fearful consequences of their sins. The chief of these wicked angels is called "Satan". He is "the God of this world". It was he who deceived our first mother, by calling in question both the veracity and love of God; and by this act Satan slandered God and became the "father of lies". He still goes about, "seeking whom he may devour".⁶⁵

Part Three.

Anthropology.

Origin and Nature of Man

In "Sheves of Ministry", Morison professes his belief in a "law of progression and evolution";⁶⁶ but he also calls God "the Creator",⁶⁷ and he speaks of man as "created".⁶⁸ The method by which Morison was able to harmonize these statements is not given to us. As a created being, man, according to Morison, is the masterpiece of creation, the "copestone of terrestrial creation".⁶⁹ "All else on earth, all even that is palaeontological, points up to him, and is culminated in him."⁷⁰

Judging from the meagre material which is given, it seems to

65. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.81 and Note 59, pp.103,104.

66. J.M. - "Sheves of Ministry," pp.189,190.

67. Ibid., p.198.

68. J.M. - "A ... Commentary on ... Mark," pp.458,459.

69. Ibid., pp.458,459.

70. Ibid., p. 459.



us that Morison holds to dichotomy with regard to the nature of man. In the "Gospel Catechism", he speaks of only the "body" and the "soul".⁷¹ When considering Matthew 22:37, he writes, "The heart, soul, and mind represent different aspects of one substantive entity - the one spiritual element of our nature, whether that element should be metaphysically simple, or in some respect constituted and compound."⁷² As for the origin of the soul, Morison holds the creationist as distinguished from the traducianist position. The soul, in his opinion, is not propagated like the body; but is an immaterial substance, not capable of propagation.⁷³ It comes directly from the hand of God.⁷⁴ The soul "does not denote any particular power, energy, or capacity of the inner nature, but the inner nature itself, under the phase of the self-conscious life-essence."⁷⁵

It should be noted further that Morison undoubtedly holds to the doctrine of the unity of the human race. He speaks of our first parent, Adam, and of the evil which all men have sustained because of Adam's sin;⁷⁶ and he writes, moreover, of the nature which is common to all men.⁷⁷

The Original State of Man

Morison teaches that man was created immortal, and impassible in the sense that he was free from the seeds of decay and death.

71. Note 52, p.97.

72. J.M. - "Commentary on Matthew's Gospel," p.457.

73. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Note 52, p.97.

74. Ibid., Q.74, p.97.

75. J.M. - "A ... Commentary on ... Mark," p.341.

76. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Qs.70, 71, p.93.

77. J.M. - "Commentary on Matthew's Gospel," p.457.

That this is his view is made clear by his statement in the "Gospel Catechism" that "all men" have been subjected to the decay and death of the body in consequence of the first sin of our first parent, Adam".⁷⁸ It is also taught by Morison that man was made in the image of God, this being one of the lessons to be learned from the creation story of Genesis. Man is like God; he is the child of God.⁷⁹ In his original state, man had dominion over the creatures. He was made the monarch over the earth on which he dwelt.⁸⁰

The Covenant of Works

In his "Gospel Catechism", Morison does not deal directly with the "covenant of works"; but in his pamphlet, "Questions on the Shorter Catechism", he says that he does not object to the statement in the "Westminster Shorter Catechism" that "when God had created man, he entered into a covenant of life with him, upon condition of perfect obedience: forbidding him to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, upon the pain of death". Morison qualifies this remark, however, by affirming that he questions whether the Westminster theologians have given a strictly Scriptural representation of what is designated "a covenant of life".⁸¹ This objection is so vague, that it is difficult to know what it means in the light of his former statement that he does not object to the statement of the Catechism.

78. Q.71, p.93.

79. J.M. - "Sheaves of Ministry," p.199.

80. Ibid., p.199.

81. Q.12, p.9.

As far as we have been able to discover, Morison does not attempt to give a statement of the arrangement or covenant which was made between God and Adam. In the "Gospel Catechism", he considers the question of the necessity of perfect obedience only from the point of view of the dutifulness of all men to God to keep perfectly the commandments of love.⁸² The one thing which is clear is, that, in Morison's opinion, temporal death is the lot of all men because of the failure of Adam to give perfect obedience to God.⁸³

The Fall

Morison affirms that it is the evil which all men have sustained because of the first sin of our first parent, Adam, which accounts for the fact that no man has yet used his freedom of the will to keep perfectly the commandments of God. We have already seen that the fall of Adam has made the bodies of all men subject to decay and death. This corruption of the "flesh" is one of the two great channels in which "moral depravity runs to us from Adam". By the depraving influence of the same sin, we are all conceived, born, and reared up in the midst of infecting iniquity.⁸⁴

The Nature of Sin

The presence of sin in any of God's intelligent creatures, according to Morison, is an impenetrable mystery; but "still the

82. Q.63, p.86.

83. Ibid., Note 50, pp.94,95.

84. Ibid., Qs. 70-73 and Note 50, pp.93-96.

mystery of iniquity really is".⁸⁵ He defines sin as "the transgression of God's moral law, ... the violation of that which is the embodiment of infinite rectitude, goodness and wisdom, ... (and) thus defiance done to God as the moral governor of the universe".⁸⁶ To this it should be added that Morison holds the philosophical view of sin that "selfishness is the essence of unrighteousness".⁸⁷ It is quite clear also from Morison's teaching that all sin is voluntary. For him only that which is the product of free will can be sinful and have moral guilt attached to it.⁸⁸ He quotes with approval the remark of Archbishop Bramhall, that "the essence of sin consists in this, that one commits that which he might avoid".⁸⁹

The Imputation of Adam's First Sin

As for the imputation of Adam's first sin to all his race, it is said, in the "Doctrinal Declaration by the Conference of the Evangelical Union", "We believe the divine constitution with Adam to have been federal in its character, and that his sin in consequence is, to the extent of the primeval curse, imputed to his posterity. We believe that the imputation of Adam's sin extends to the whole race...."⁹⁰ Morison himself writes, "We admit and contend that there is a highly important sense in which Adam's first sin is imputed to all men. All men suffer on account of

85. J.M. - "The Christian Propitiation," Art. in "The Evangelical Repository," Vol.II, No.5, Sept., 1855. p.17.

86. Ibid., p.16. (See bibliography)

87. J.M. - "A ... Commentary on ... Mark," p.289.

88. Ibid., pp.188,189.

89. J.M. - "Commentary on Matthew's Gospel," p.344.

90. Page 7.

it; they suffer death.... And, in thus suffering, they are not deprived of any blessing which, as creatures, they had a right to claim."⁹¹ For Morison, however, imputation does not involve moral implication and guilt. There is no transference of Adam's guilt for the simple reason that guilt is not transferable. Furthermore, if a man can be guilty of a sin to which he never gave his consent, and which indeed was committed long before he lived, the most outrageous tyranny would be right and righteous.⁹²

Original Sin and Moral Depravity

Morison's view of original sin is the same as that of the Arminians who are represented by Dr Whitby. As a result of Adam's sin, man has become depraved and utterly helpless and hopeless in the matter of salvation until he comes under the gracious provisions of the plan of mercy.⁹³ The nature of man has undergone a deterioration and depravation because of Adam's sin; and it is beyond dispute that this deterioration has to do with those elements of our being which surround the moral faculty with motives, and that it must exert a powerful influence either for good or evil.⁹⁴ We have already pointed out the teaching of Morison, that the decay and death of the body of man are consequences of the first sin of our first parent, and that it is by means of the depraving influence of that same sin, that we are conceived, born

91. J.M. - "Questions on the Shorter Catechism," Q.18, p.11.

92. Ibid., Q.18, p.11.

93. "Doctrinal Declaration ... Evangelical Union," p.7.

94. J.M. - "Apology for Those Evangelical Doctrines," p.39.
(See bibliography)

and reared up in the midst of infecting iniquity.⁹⁵ The death suffered because of Adam's sin is merely temporal death, the death of the body; and this mortality is the result of a physical depravation, or corruption of the flesh. Moral depravity comes to us through this corruption of the flesh, and the sinful environment in which we are born and reared.⁹⁶

There is no guilt connected with original sin in such a sense that it brings on man the condemning wrath of God. While Morison holds that original sin makes men liable to temporal punishment, he does not agree that it makes them subject to eternal punishment.⁹⁷ When he was on trial before the Synod, Morison held that all men are guilty of Adam's sin in the sense that they are righteously subjected to suffering and depravity because of it, in consequence of their connection with Adam, as their public head. At that time, Morison also held that no man would suffer eternal death merely on account of original sin, for Christ has atoned for original sin.⁹⁸ This is the only place, however, that we have found this last statement. Neither this, nor the preceding, that men are in some sense guilty of the sin of Adam, harmonizes with other statements which Morison made later. At a later period, we find him saying that to suppose men "are guilty of a sin which they never committed and to which they never gave their consent, is to

95. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.71, pp.93,94.

96. Ibid., Q.73 and Note 50, pp.94-96.

97. "Remarks by James Morison on the 'Doctrinal Errors Condemned by the United Associate Synod', May, 1842," pp.1,2.

98. "Report ... Proceedings ... United Associate Synod ... Cases ... James Morison," etc., p.29.

land in a quagmire, in which moral distinctions between right and wrong are merged."⁹⁹ We believe it was with a view to consistency that Morison dropped the idea of an atonement for original sin, but we do not believe that he ever tried to explain how a man could be guilty of Adam's sin even to the extent that temporal punishment could be meted out to him.

The mature position of Morison is that men are not sinful before they sin,¹⁰⁰ and that there is no transference of Adam's guilt.¹⁰¹ This is manifest from his views regarding the state of the souls of children. Infants are not guilty of Adam's first sin, nor are their souls morally depraved on account of it.¹⁰² Children are born sinless because the soul comes directly from God. There can be no sin in the soul until it voluntarily transgresses the law of God.¹⁰³ The souls of infants are not morally depraved or polluted until they choose evil or refuse good.¹⁰⁴ In conclusion, it may be said that in Morison's opinion there is no guilt in original sin, and that original sin is merely a physical deterioration which is followed by a moral depravation.

Morison believes, however, that "all of the powers of the soul are perverted, alienated from God, and devoted to objects and pursuits degrading to the soul itself, and inimical to the just claims

99. J.M. - "Apology for Those Evangelical Doctrines," etc., p.39.
(See bibliography)

100. Ibid., p.39.

101. J.M. - "Questions on the Shorter Catechism," Q.18, p.11.

102. J.M. - "Apology for ... Evangelical Doctrines," etc., p.38.
(See bibliography)

103. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.74, p.97.

104. J.M. - "Apology for ... Evangelical Doctrines," etc., p.39.
(See bibliography)

and supreme glory of God.¹⁰⁵ This evil condition of the soul is moral and not natural; man is criminal, and justly responsible for his depravity, and pollution of heart.¹⁰⁶ Here then is a description of man as morally depraved. How, in Morison's view, has man reached this condition?

This moral depravity, as we have seen, does not come directly from Adam. Men receive as the result of Adam's sin a physical depravation, and they are born and reared in a sinful environment because of that sin. This depraved physical nature and this depraving environment lead men to choose evil rather than good; and in this way they become morally depraved. Morison says that this evil which makes men criminal and polluted is moral, that is, it is an evil which can exist only through voluntary acts of the soul.¹⁰⁷ In the "Gospel Catechism", he declares, "It is in the universal habit of transgressing the commandments of God that the universal depravity of man consists. Law-breaking children, therefore are depraved."¹⁰⁸

Human Ability and Inability.

Morison teaches that ability limits responsibility. "Responsibility," he writes, "is measured by ability. Indeed there can be no other measure of responsibility, but ability."¹⁰⁹ If we

105. J.M. - "The Nature of the Holy Spirit's Work," etc. An Art. in "The Evangelical Repository," Vol.II, No.8, June, 1856, p.241.

106. Ibid., pp.241,242.

107. Ibid., p.242.

108. Note 47, pp.89,90.

109. J.M. - "Ability to Believe," Art. in "The Evangelical Repository," 2nd Series, Vol.I, No.4, 1859, p.277.

have no ability to keep the law, we must be blameless for breaking it.¹¹⁰ Morison holds, furthermore, that God bids no man do more than He has given him strength to perform; and he adds that if he did not believe this, he could not prove the accountability of man. Man cannot be responsible for not doing what he is absolutely unable to do.¹¹¹

What is the nature of the ability which Morison ascribes to man in spiritual matters? We have seen already that Morison teaches that man is depraved and is utterly helpless and hopeless in the matter of salvation. Man cannot make atonement for himself, nor can he bring himself by his unaided strength under its influence, for the former is the work of Christ, and the latter involves the work of the Holy Spirit who persuades and guides the sinner to faith in the inspired gospel. When all this has been done, however, "the sinner is able to surrender himself to this divine influence, and believe, and be saved."¹¹² Thus it is not necessary, according to Morison, for the sinner to pray for power to believe, for he has this power already.¹¹³ While faith is the gift of God, it is a gift which may either be received or rejected.¹¹⁴ All men, moreover, have the ability to keep perfectly the commandments of love;¹¹⁵ and included in this is the ability to love

110. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Note 44, p.86.

111. "Report ... Proceedings ... United Associate Synod ... Cases ... James Morison," etc., p.25.

112. "Doctrinal Declaration ... Evangelical Union," p.14.

113. J.M. - "The Question, 'What Must I Do to be Saved?' Answered," p.12 (1845 edit.)

114. J.M. - "Ability to Believe," p.278. (See bibliography)

115. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.61, p.85.

God.¹¹⁶ The diverse use which men make of the grace which is bestowed on all accounts for the fact that one man is converted and another is not.¹¹⁷

It is not want of power, but want of inclination, which keeps a sinner from turning to God and being saved. "Any man," writes Morison, "is perfectly able, with the faculties he already possesses, to believe the gospel and thus secure his salvation."¹¹⁸ On the other hand, no man has ever been willing, or ever will be willing, of himself, to avail himself of the atonement.¹¹⁹ This want of inclination is called by Morison "moral inability", and he admits that all men labour under this. He disapproves of the phrase "moral inability", however, for he believes it is calculated to lead ignorant and unlearned people to suppose that there is really more preventing them from doing their duty than obstinacy and want of inclination.¹²⁰

Freedom of the Will

The will of man, according to Morison, is free. If it is necessarily determined in its volition, the will of man ceases to be will; and there can be no such necessitation of the actions of a man as is of a nature at variance with the contingency of his volitions.¹²¹ The will is an efficient cause; and the one

116. J.M. - "A ... Commentary on ... Mark," p.342.

117. J.M. - "Why One Sinner is Converted, and Another is Not," Art. in "The Evangelical Repository," Vol.II, No.5, Sept., 1855, p.49.

118. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," pp.60,61.

119. "Report ... Proceedings ... United Associate Synod ... Cases ... James Morison," etc., p.25.

120. Ibid., p.26.

121. J.M. - "An Exposition of the Ninth Chapter of Paul's Epistle to the Romans," p.4 (1st edit., 1849).

respect in which it differs from the other faculties of the soul is in its being free.¹²² Since the fall, as truly as before it, man is free to choose; and this freedom he retains whatever character he develops. Bias or settled character is in no respect subversive of freedom.¹²³

The great controversy which has been carried on by those who have held to contingency and those who have held to certainty has been, whether, when a man decides to do a certain thing, his will is determined by the previous state of his mind; or, with precisely the same views and feelings, his decision may be one way at one time, and another way at another. It is a question as to whether or not the will, or rather the agent, must be undetermined in order to be free. In agreement with what we have said above, Morison, in this controversy, takes the side of those who hold to contingency. He affirms that the will "has liberty of choice, and at the very moment of determining to act, and to act in one direction rather than another, is capable of determining otherwise.... It is of the essence of moral government that it presents to its subjects an alternative of two courses, with freedom or ability to pursue the one or the other, only burdened with the announcement of God's authoritative command to do the right, and of his promises and threatenings of final awards, conditioned on, and adapted and proportioned to, their conformity or nonconformity to his will."¹²⁴

122. J.M. - "The Human Will," art. in "The Evangelical Repository," Vol.III, No.9, Sept., 1856. p.55.

123. "Doctrinal Declaration ... Evangelical Union," pp.4,5.

124. J.M. - "The Divine Moral Government," art. in "The Evangelical Repository," Vol.I, No.1, Sept., 1854, p.8.

"Although the self-same influence were brought upon two minds in exactly the same state," writes Morison, "we could not predict that the result, in both cases, would be exactly the same, for ... the will, the free will, the lordly free will, in virtue of which man is responsible to his God, may not, in both cases, come to the same determination."¹²⁵

In the "Doctrinal Declaration by the Conference of the Evangelical Union", an attempt is made to safeguard the doctrine of free will from being misunderstood; so it is declared that, in affirming the freedom of the will, it is not to be supposed that the heathen doctrine of Chance is held, or that any event happens without a cause; but that the will-endowed mind, though acting in view of motives, is the free and self-determining cause of its own choices.¹²⁶

Part Four.

Soteriology.

The Plan of Salvation.

After Morison had departed from the Calvinism of the Westminster standards, he held two views of God's plan for the salvation of men. Until 1843 he held what is known in the history of theology as "the doctrine of hypothetical universalism", which in

125. J.M. - "Why is One Sinner Converted, and Another Not?" p.48.
(See bibliography)

126. "Doctrinal Declaration ... Evangelical Union," p.5.

the seventeenth century had Amyraut, Professor in the French Protestant Seminary at Saumur, as its principal advocate. After 1843 Morison held to the Remonstrant or Arminian position.

The first position of Morison, then, was that of "hypothetical universalism". 1. The motive which impelled God to redeem was His love to men in general.¹²⁷ God is not willing that any should perish, and will have all to be saved.¹²⁸ 2. This motive led God to send his Son to make the salvation of all men possible. God has made the way clear for all to believe and to be saved "by giving his Son to die for all".¹²⁹ 3. God offers salvation to all men on condition of faith in Christ. Every man is able to say, "Christ has made propitiation for my sins, seeing it is true he has made propitiation for the sins of the whole world;" but before any particular man is able to be saved, he must believe it to be true that Christ made propitiation for him.¹³⁰ Morison assures every sinner that God is as truly satisfied for all of his sins as if he had never committed them at all. God is entirely and already "propitiated". If the sinner perishes now, it will be because he will not believe God when God tells him that He is satisfied for all the sinner's bad works, and for all his want of good ones.¹³¹ The moment any sinner becomes a believer, in that moment he becomes a child of God.¹³² 4. All men, as we have seen

127. J.M. - "The Nature of the Propitiation," p.24.

128. "Doctrinal Declaration ... Evangelical Union," p.8.

129. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," p.56.

130. J.M. - "The Question, 'What Must I Do to be Saved?' Answered," p.7 (1840 edit.).

131. J.M. - "Saving Faith," pp.42,43.

132. Ibid., p.44.

in a preceding section, have a natural ability to repent and believe. 5. This natural ability, however, is counteracted by a moral inability; so God has determined to give His efficacious grace to a certain number of the human race, and thus to secure their salvation. In the editions of "The Question, 'What Must I Do to be Saved?' Answered" which were published before Morison adopted the Arminian point of view in 1843, it is said that the sinner will most assuredly not be saved unless he has "been chosen before the foundation of the world".¹³³ Morison affirms, however, that election, in the order of nature, comes after the atonement.¹³⁴ "The harmony of doctrines," writes Morison, "I apprehend to be the following: God foresaw that all men would become hell-deserving sinners; he resolved, in consequence of his ineffable love and pity, to provide an atonement sufficient for the salvation of all; he resolved to offer this atonement to all, so that all should be able and all should be welcome to come and accept it as 'all their salvation'. He foresaw, however, that not one out of the whole human family would be willing to be saved in this way, - and then he elected. That all might not be lost, that Jesus might 'see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied', he resolved to bestow on some, such influences of his Spirit as would infallibly dispose them to accept what all others are able and welcome to take."¹³⁵

Morison, as has already been pointed out, came to the conclusion that he was wrong in holding to the doctrine of election as

133. Page 13 (1840 edit.).

134. Ibid., p.14.

135. J.M. - "The Question, 'What Must I Do to be Saved?' Answered," p.14 (1840 edit.).

a determination from all eternity to bestow the Holy Spirit on some of mankind, so that those who have thus been chosen will certainly be saved. This new conviction, of course, had its influence on the plan of salvation in Morison's system of theology. In the editions of "The Question, 'What Must I Do to be Saved?' Answered" which appeared after the change had taken place, the section on election in the older editions was left out entirely, and changes were made in the section which had formerly preceded and that which had followed the section on election. In the eleventh section, he leaves out the statement that faith is invariably the fruit of the Spirit's operation.¹³⁶ It is clear that Morison's view of the work of the Spirit is purely suasive.¹³⁷ He continues to hold that it is God who makes one man to differ from the other; but, on the other hand, he teaches that unbelief, which the sinner is able to remove himself, is the only thing which stands between the sinner and salvation.¹³⁸ We can find no attempt to reconcile these doctrines.

The following statements give more specifically the changes which were brought about in Morison's conception of the plan of salvation when he gave up the Amyraldian view and adopted the Arminian. 1. Up to and through the statement of the work of Christ in making a universal propitiation, the final scheme of Morison is identical with that which we have given in the pages which have

136. Compare Page 13 of the 1840 edition and page 13 of the 1845 edition.

137. J.M. - "The Question, 'What Must I Do to be Saved?' Answered," p.13 (1845 edit.)

138. Ibid., p.13.

gone before. 2. The work of the Spirit is made as universal as the work of Christ. "We have all along maintained," says Morison, "that the grace of God the Holy Spirit is as free and worldwide as the grace of God the Father and God the Son."¹³⁹

3. Those, who of their own free will co-operate with the divine grace, are converted and saved. In his defence of the "Doctrinal Declaration by the Conference of the Evangelical Union," Morison says that the Evangelical Union hold to the ideas of synergism which were put forward by that illustrious reformer, Melancthon. He goes on to say that, among other things, Melancthon held that the sinner must "concur with the gracious influence which is divinely energising the soul".¹⁴⁰ It is only in this way that the Evangelical Unionists can account for the fact that man is called upon again and again "to convert himself", or "turn himself to the Lord"; while, at the same time, man is also in other passages of the Scriptures represented as being divinely "converted", or "turned", namely, by the agency of the Spirit of God.¹⁴¹ 4. The last change which must be noted is that, in Morison's final view, election is conceived of as being based on foresight of faith. Only those who choose to accept the gracious invitation of God can be chosen to be partakers of the divine hospitality and bliss. The chosen are "chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father".¹⁴²

139. J.M. - "Why is One Sinner Converted, and Another Not?", p.47.
(See bibliography)

140. J.M. "Apology for Those Evangelical Doctrines," p.70.
(See bibliography)

141. Ibid., pp.70,71.

142. J.M. - "Commentary on Matthew's Gospel," p.444.

The Covenant of Grace

In the theology of Morison, the covenant of grace is not discussed at great length, but there are a few passing references to it. The longest of these are to be found at those points in the commentaries on Matthew and Mark at which the Lord's Supper is discussed. In these places, he says that the plan of salvation takes the form of a covenant; and, especially in the "Commentary on Matthew", he gives the various factors which enter into the covenant. Morison holds that the parties of the covenant are God and man. The promise includes the forgiveness of sin and all of those blessings which are the appropriate complement of the divine forgiveness, and which are all summed up in everlasting bliss. The condition of the covenant is that man will voluntarily accept God's mercy, repent, believe, and live by faith.¹⁴³ In the last resort, therefore, it is man who determines who, in accordance with this plan, is to be saved and who is not. We have already given evidence from the writings of Morison which proves the accuracy of this statement, and we shall present more proof in the latter part of this chapter, especially when we come to the consideration of Morison's view of faith.

The Person of Christ

There can be no doubt that, while Morison deals only in a cursory manner with the doctrine of the person of Christ, he gives his approval to the doctrine which was set forth in the statements of

143. J.M. - "Commentary on Matthew's Gospel," p.584.

the first six general councils, and which is held also by the Reformed churches. Oliphant Smeaton says that "any attempt to Socinianise the glorious 'divine humanity' of our blessed Saviour" was one of the things which would rouse James Morison.¹⁴⁴

"Christ," declares Morison, "is both God and man."¹⁴⁵ In our presentation of Morison's doctrine of the Trinity, we have made clear his teaching that Christ is God. In the "Gospel Catechism", Hebrews 1:8 is quoted as proof that the Son is God.¹⁴⁶ As for Christ's human nature, it is the teaching of Morison that our Saviour took our human nature into union with his divinity, and thus became man.¹⁴⁷ The virgin birth of Christ is taught in the opening pages of Morison's "Commentary on Matthew".¹⁴⁸ In this commentary, and also that on Mark, too many examples of the humanity of Christ are given for us to enumerate.

There is no evidence that Morison did not believe Christ to be one person, though a person with a human nature and a divine nature. The only inference which can be drawn from the statements which we have given above and from many more which appear in the works of Morison is that Christ is considered to be only one person.

The Nature and Extent of the Atonement

The problems which centre in the atonement of our Lord are of especial importance in any consideration of the theology of James

144. O. Smeaton - "Principal James Morison," p.228.

145. J.M. - "The Christian Propitiation," p.20. (See bibliography)

146. Q.33, p.42.

147. Ibid., Q.90, p.115.

148. J.M. - "Commentary on Matthew's Gospel," p.12.

Morison, for these problems first led him to adopt views which were at variance with those of his fathers and brethren in the United Secession Church; and the solutions which he gave to these problems connected with the atonement led him to develop the rest of his theological system. Three of the chapters which follow will, therefore, be devoted to the consideration of various aspects of Morison's views on the atonement; so, at this point, we shall merely give a brief summary of his opinions respecting the nature and extent of the atonement, in order that this dogmatic statement of Morison's theology may be complete.

Morison defines the atonement as "an expedient introduced into the divine moral government, consisting of the obedience unto death of Jesus Christ, which has completely removed all legal obstacles standing between man and salvation".¹⁴⁹ In the case of gospel-hearers, the only obstacle which is not removed by the propitiation of Christ is "unbelief".¹⁵⁰ As for the extent of the atonement, it is taught by Morison that Christ has atoned for every sinner. He accomplished nothing on Calvary which was not for each sinner.¹⁵¹ Jesus, by His propitiatory righteousness, has again opened to us the gates of heaven; and it is now possible for every man on earth to be saved with everlasting salvation.¹⁵²

149. J.M. - "The Nature of the Propitiation," p.34.

150. Ibid., p.39.

151. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," p.5.

152. J.M. - "Biblical Help," p.105.

The Death, Burial, Resurrection, Ascension,
and Session of Christ at the Right Hand of
the Father

Morison teaches that Christ did not merely faint or swoon away when He was nailed to the cross, but really died.¹⁵³ After the death of Jesus, His body was laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.¹⁵⁴ On the first day of the week, Christ, in fulfilment of the prophecy which He had uttered again and again in the hearing of His disciples, rose from the dead. "The resurrection of our Lord," writes Morison, "is the culminating or crowning fact of Christianity. It is historically, as well as theologically, incontrovertible."¹⁵⁵ After His appearances unto men, our Lord was taken up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God the Father - the place of highest honour in the universe.¹⁵⁶

The Universal Offer of Salvation

To a great degree, it was because James Morison was troubled about the universal offer of the gospel that he turned to the doctrine of an unlimited atonement. It will be recalled from what was said in Chapter One, that Morison was sent to the North after he had completed his theological course. While he was there many people consulted him about their spiritual problems, and he hesitated to tell them indiscriminately that Christ had died for them.¹⁵⁷

153. J.M. - "Commentary on Matthew's Gospel," p.654.

154. Ibid., 661.

155. Ibid., 671.

156. J.M. - "A ... Commentary on ... Mark," p.462.

157. W. Adamson - "The Life of the Rev. James Morison, D.D.", pp.56,57.

He did not believe that on the basis of his Calvinistic creed he could offer salvation to all. This led him to conclude, that if the gospel was to be sincerely offered to all, Christ must have died for all. After this we find him addressing to all men such expressions as, "Christ died for you", and "Christ died for all your sins"; and on the basis of his belief in the universal atonement, he called on all men to believe.

Morison teaches that in the Scriptures "all without exception, and all equally without any distinction between elect and non-elect, are invited, urged, implored, and commanded to accept salvation."¹⁵⁸ In the opinion of Morison, God cannot be sincere in this offer unless there has been an atonement for all.¹⁵⁹ "God is sincere, O sinner," writes Morison, "when he bids you come and get salvation; and he is sincere because there is salvation for you."¹⁶⁰

Faith

In the teaching of James Morison, faith is the credit which we give to a testimony. Faith and belief are synonymous terms, which are indiscriminately given to one and the same exercise of mind. It is one word in the New Testament which is translated by both terms. Faith, then, is "but the mind saying 'yes' to the credible report of an honest and qualified witness". As far as Christian faith is concerned, the gospel report is God's testimony; and God undoubtedly is a witness whose testimony is above suspicion.

158. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," p.41.

159. Ibid., p.38.

160. Ibid., p.41.

What God says in His report must be true; and faith, as exercised by the sinner, is merely the assent of his mind to what God says. The believer is one who "sets his seal that God is true". The unbeliever is one who says that what God has reported is not true.¹⁶¹ When the Bible speaks of the necessity of believing with the heart, it does not, according to Morison, mean anything different from believing with the head.¹⁶²

It is clear from these statements that for Morison faith is purely intellectual. This is confirmed by his assertion that ignorance is the mother of damnation. "There never was an unbeliever on earth," he says, "that knew what the gospel is."¹⁶³ It is confirmed also by his denial that there are different kinds of faith. Morison says that "the numerical multiplication of faiths has crept in after the times of inspiration", and that "it is entirely unapostolical and anti-scriptural".¹⁶⁴ There is no possibility, therefore, of believing "the right thing in a wrong way".¹⁶⁵ There is, and must be, but one way of believing; and that is by a simple act of mind.¹⁶⁶ The act of mind by which one believes that Adam ate the forbidden fruit is precisely the same act which is called saving faith. The only reason for its being called saving faith is to be found in the fact that the truth which is believed is fitted to save the soul.¹⁶⁷ Fergus Ferguson,

161. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," p.41 (Summary).

162. J.M. - "Saving Faith," p.34.

163. J.M. - "Not Quite a Christian," p.4 (1844 edit.).

164. J.M. - "Saving Faith," p.27.

165. Ibid., p.27.

166. Ibid., p.27.

167. J.M. - "The Question, 'What Must I Do to be Saved?' Answered," p.8 (1845 edit.)

in his "History of the Evangelical Union", says that as far as trust is concerned, Morison would make it an effect, and not an essential part, of faith.¹⁶⁸

While affirming that the right things cannot be believed in the wrong way, Morison emphasizes the fact that it is most important for one's eternal welfare that he believe the right thing. The act of faith is also necessary, for without it the object of faith could never be brought to bear upon the mind. But it is the object looked at alone which affects the mind; so that is why it is so important that the right thing be believed.¹⁶⁹ The object of saving faith, then, is the universal atonement, or, as Morison usually puts it, the statement, "Christ has died for me, and done all for me, and finished the work for me, so that God is satisfied for my sins".¹⁷⁰ Sometimes Morison says that the true object of Christian faith is Jesus.¹⁷¹ No doubt this is to be understood in the light of what is said in "Saving Faith" about "believing in Christ". In that work, Morison writes, "To believe in Christ is to believe what is said about Christ."¹⁷²

Unbelief is the "SOUL-DAMNING CRIME";¹⁷³ and it is also a very great crime not to believe immediately.¹⁷⁴ The sinner should not pray for help to believe; he should believe, for he already has the ability to do so in the same way that he has the ability

168. Page 74.

169. J.M. - "Saving Faith," pp.35,36.

170. Ibid., p.44.

171. J.M. - "Sheaves of Ministry," pp.294-295.

172. J.M. - "Saving Faith," p.33.

173. Ibid., p.44.

174. Ibid., p.14.

to believe any other well-accredited testimony.¹⁷⁵ As we have mentioned before, Morison teaches that faith is truly the "gift of God", but it is a gift which all men can accept or reject.¹⁷⁶

It is by faith alone that the sinner is saved. "No works of impure man can propitiate God for our sins."¹⁷⁷ All that a man does before he is a believer is sinful.¹⁷⁸ According to Morison, one of the reasons why we are saved by faith alone is that, while we are disposed to assume credit to ourselves for our love, kindness, and other virtues, we never think of taking credit to ourselves for giving credence to a trustworthy report.¹⁷⁹

In spite of this last statement, Morison in his article, "Why is One Sinner Converted, and Another Not?" admits that there is some "minor merit" in saving faith. There can, according to Morison, be no merit in faith itself, for faith is an act of the intellect, and, therefore, necessary; but, "inasmuch as the intellectual act is preceded by an act of the will, more or less strong according to the circumstances, namely, a determination to attend to the testimony and its evidence, speaking in a wide and comprehensive sense, a man may be justly commended for his faith".¹⁸⁰ Morison hastens to point out that it does not follow from this that salvation is not of grace. "Faith may not involve merit in any such sense as that, on the ground of it, the soul could be pardoned and saved eternally:

175. J.M. - "Saving Faith," pp.17-19 (Summary).

176. J.M. - "Ability to Believe," p.278 (See bibliography).

177. J.M. - "Do Works," art. in "The Evangelical Repository," 1st Series, Vol.IV, No.15, p.178.

178. J.M. - "The Question, 'What Must I Do to be Saved?' Answered," p.11 (1845 edit.).

179. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Note 76, p.127.

180. Pages 51,52. (See bibliography)

and yet, in the sense already explained, the believer's reception of the gospel, as contrasted with the unbeliever's rejection of the same, may constitute him a proper object of commendation."¹⁸¹
 "And certainly the infinitely worthy Lamb will not be jealous of this minor merit, if merit it can be called; for, as manifested in the first act of justifying faith, what does it amount to but this, that the poor sinner has been wise enough, when the Holy Spirit had demonstrated his misery to him, to flee in his rags and wretchedness to Christ?"¹⁸²

The fruits of faith are trust,¹⁸³ pardon, justification,¹⁸⁴ peace with God,¹⁸⁵ joy in the Holy Ghost, hope of the glory of God,¹⁸⁶ regeneration,¹⁸⁷ and good works.¹⁸⁸

Repentance

Repentance comes before faith, but its true meaning is not "godly sorrow for sin", as is taught in so many theological treatises. In Scripture, repentance simply means "a change of mind". In this sense of the term, repentance must come before faith. All impenitent persons are expecting to be saved in some other way than by believing "the record of God", regarding his Son's propitiation for their sins; and most of them are looking for godly

181. J.M. - "Why is One Sinner Converted, and Another not?" p.52.
 (See bibliography)

182. Ibid., p.53.

183. F. Ferguson - "History of the Evangelical Union," p.74.

184. J.M. - "Biblical Help," p.108.

185. J.M. - "Saving Faith," p.20.

186. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Qs.122,124, p.147.

187. J.M. - "Saving Faith," p.22.

188. "Report ... Proceedings ... United Associate Synod ... Cases ... James Morison," etc., p.22.

sorrow for sin, before they will believe. On this matter, they must change their minds. They must believe first, and then have godly sorrow for their sins.¹⁸⁹ Repentance, when viewed in reference to sin, brings after it, as a necessary consequence, a change of feeling and a change of conduct.¹⁹⁰

The Holy Spirit's Office in the Work of Redemption

In the "Gospel Catechism", Morison discusses the work of the Spirit in the redemptive plan after he has completed his discussions of the doctrines of faith and repentance. We shall follow him in this arrangement. The following, then, are the principal points in Morison's doctrine of the work of the Spirit in this sphere.

1. It was the Spirit who, in co-operation with the Father, performed some special action in the birth of Christ so that the Saviour might be truly divine.¹⁹¹ The Spirit, furthermore, endued the human nature of our Lord with every power for His work;¹⁹² and it was the Spirit who sustained and replenished the humanity of Christ.¹⁹³
2. The truth concerning the propitiation of Christ was made known by the Spirit to the minds of holy men of old; and He caused them to commit to writing what they received for the benefit of the world in all ages.¹⁹⁴ The Holy Spirit, moreover, by a wonderful and holy providence, preserves the Bible

189. J.M. - "The Question, 'What Must I Do to be Saved?' Answered," p.11. (1845 edit.)

190. "Report ... Proceedings ... United Associate Synod ... Cases ... James Morison," etc., p.28.

191. J.M. - "Commentary on Matthew's Gospel," p.8.

192. Ibid., p.219.

193. Ibid., pp.224,225.

194. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.106, p.132.

and spreads it abroad in the world.¹⁹⁵ 3. It is the office of the Spirit to raise up men of God whom He qualifies to proclaim and explain the precious truths of the gospel.¹⁹⁶ 4. By His influence, the Spirit converts,¹⁹⁷ regenerates,¹⁹⁸ and sanctifies.¹⁹⁹

It will be necessary for us to consider in more detail the way in which, according to Morison, the influence of the Spirit leads to the conversion of the sinner, for on this point he came to differ widely from the Calvinism of his youth. In the section of this chapter entitled, "The Plan of Salvation", we have seen that Morison adopted the doctrine of hypothetical redemption when he first broke away from Calvinism. We have noted, furthermore, that in 1843 he gave up this position also, and espoused the Arminian view of the influence of the Spirit in conversion. It is Morison's presentation of this latter view which we are to consider here.

The influence of the Spirit is not given in a miraculous,²⁰⁰ a will-necessitating,²⁰¹ or a mechanical manner, for conversion, according to Morison, is a moral effect, and, therefore, needs for its accomplishment a moral means.²⁰² The influence must be a moral one, and moral influence is the influence of motives.²⁰³

195. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.109, p.134.

196. Ibid., Q.109, pp.134,135.

197. J.M. - "Saving Faith," Note D, p.49.

198. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.126, pp.149,150.

199. J.M. - "Apology for Those Evangelical Doctrines," etc., p.7.
(See bibliography)

200. J.M. - "Saving Faith," Note D, p.49.

201. J.M. - "Apology for Those Evangelical Doctrines," etc., p.7.
(See bibliography)

202. J.M. - "Saving Faith," Note D, p.49.

203. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Note 87, p.135.

This means that the influence of the Spirit is not immediate, but mediate, that is, through the use of means.²⁰⁴ In the tract, "Wherein 'the Morisonians' are Not Wrong But Wronged", Morison declares that it is most assuredly not his doctrine, nor that of the Bible, that the Holy Spirit directly changes the heart.²⁰⁵

In one article, "The Nature of the Holy Spirit's Work", Morison gives some additional material about the influence of the Spirit which we have not seen anywhere else in his writings. In this he says that he has all along admitted and assumed, that the Spirit, in addition to His mediate influence, may also directly influence the mind; but he adds that such influences are subordinate and merely auxiliary to those which are through the means of the gospel of the grace of God. The Spirit may directly influence the mind by modifying and controlling the material conditions of the mind's existence and operations, and in this way may give the mind a great advantage in moral and spiritual exercises. "We can conceive," continues Morison, "of the Spirit acting directly on the soul itself," raising it "to a state of more piercing intuition," and lifting "its noble sensibilities to a higher intensity." Thus, the Spirit can place the soul "in a highly advantageous position to know the truth". This direct influence, however, does not constitute the "new birth".²⁰⁶

In his defence of the "Doctrinal Declaration by the Conference

204. J.M. - "The Nature of the Holy Spirit's Work," p.244. (See bibliography)

205. Article in "The Evangelical Repository," 2nd Series, Vol.III, No.10, 1860, p.111.

206. Pages 256,257 (Summary). (See bibliography)

of the Evangelical Union", Morison emphasizes the fact that the influence of the Spirit is necessary for salvation, and he affirms also his belief in "special influences" of the Spirit in the work of redemption.²⁰⁷ Morison does not explain what he means by these statements, but we believe it is safe to assume that he does not mean any more than we have pointed out above. Without the mediate influences of the Spirit there is no salvation; and those influences of the Spirit which are not common are the same as those which we have set forth in the last paragraph.

It is because the influence of the Spirit in the work of conversion is moral and mediate that it is resistible and quenchable. The Spirit limits the intensity of the power of His operations to such a degree that they may be, and are in fact, resisted.²⁰⁸

We must notice also Morison's views on the extent of the Spirit's influence. To his teaching of the universality of the love of God the Father, the universality of the propitiation of God the Son, Morison adds his doctrine of the universality of the influence of God the Holy Spirit. The love of the Father, the atonement of the Son, and the work of the Spirit are mutually consistent and co-extensive throughout, and each embraces, in its merciful scope, the entire family of man.²⁰⁹ Morison says that wherever the gospel is clearly and sincerely preached, the Spirit

207. J.M. - "Apology for Those Evangelical Doctrines," etc., p.7.
(See bibliography)

208. J.M. - "Does Scripture Teach that the Influences of the Spirit are Resistible?" art. in "The Evangelical Repository," 1st Series, Vol.III, No.10, p.121.

209. "Doctrinal Declaration ... Evangelical Union," p.7.

is "knocking" at the hearts of all hearers; and if any of these privileged ones remain unconverted while their neighbours are saved, the difference is not caused by any sovereign withholding of essential grace from the former, but by their own carelessness and unbelief.²¹⁰

Some difficulty is experienced, however, in explaining how the influence of the Spirit can be universal. What is said in the last paragraph concerns those who hear the gospel. But what of those who never hear it? How is the influence of the Spirit extended to them? Morison answers, "Some, it is true, have no other bible than Nature without and Conscience within. Others, although they may have the written word, have no pastor or teacher; while others again are favoured with the most enlightened and unctuous ministrations. But on these providential inequalities the loving saying of the Saviour sheds its satisfactory light, 'unto whom much is given of him shall much be required'. And let it be specially noted that the man with the less degree of privilege may be converted, while he who has been like the Jews of old, most signally favoured, may live and die impenitent."²¹¹

Pardon

In the same moment that a sinner believes the gospel, he is, by the mercy of God, pardoned and saved.²¹² The sinner is

210. J.M. - "Why is One Sinner Converted, and Another Not?" p.47.
(See bibliography)

211. Ibid., p.54.

212. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.113, p.140.

pardoned or forgiven, not in the sense that he is freed from all the evil effects of his sin as experienced on earth, but in the sense of being freed, for the sake of the propitiation of Christ, from exposure to the everlasting effects of sin, which are the full and appropriate punishment of that sin; and of being from that time forth treated by God as if he had not sinned.²¹³

Morison is careful to guard himself against the possibility of being gravely misunderstood. He emphasizes the fact that subscription to the doctrine of universal propitiation does not involve adherence to the doctrine of universal pardon. He says that he must hold the former, for it is upon it that he risks his "own eternal all"; but he never did, and never can, hold the doctrine of universal pardon.²¹⁴

Pardon has reference to God's character as Father, while propitiation has reference to God as Moral Governor. It is only as the Governor of the public weal that God needs a propitiation, and not as a Father and Friend. God pardons in the character of a Father. Pardon is anti-judicial and anti-rectoral. Hence the same sin must be atoned for and pardoned before the sinner can enjoy at once the rectoral and fatherly favour of God.²¹⁵ The death of Christ, in itself, pardoned no sin; it is only "a something" in consideration of which sins may, and without which no sin may, be pardoned. Not until a man believes will he be pardoned by God.²¹⁶

213. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.114, pp.141,142.

214. J.M. - "The Nature of the Propitiation," pp.4,5.

215. Ibid., pp.8,9.

216. Ibid., p.10,11.

Justification

There is no part of Morison's theology which is more confusing than his doctrine of justification. We find it exceedingly difficult to harmonize this doctrine with the rest of his system, especially with his views of the nature and extent of the atonement. The language which he uses to set forth the doctrine is Calvinistic, but certainly the Calvinistic meanings cannot be given to the terms which are used. What meaning can be assigned to "the righteousness of God", which Morison holds is imputed to the believer, is difficult for us to discover. We shall, therefore, present the doctrine just as it appears in the writings of Morison, and then we shall leave it to the reader to make of it what he can.

Morison declares that justification is not pardon, and, therefore, it must be carefully distinguished from it. It is doubtless the same blessing which receives the two-fold description of justification and pardon;²¹⁷ but it is the same blessing viewed in different aspects.²¹⁸ The difference between the two becomes evident when we consider that one may be pardoned many times, but he can be justified only once. Furthermore, God pardons only in the character of Father; He justifies only in the character of Judge. Again, sin when pardoned is regarded as an act of filial disobedience; but when the sinner receives justification, his sins are regarded as transgressions of the public law.²¹⁹ Finally, pardon gives deliverance from everlasting woe, while justification imparts the heirship

217. J.M. - "Questions on the Shorter Catechism," Q.33, p.20.

218. "Report ... Proceedings ... United Associate Synod ... Cases ... James Morison," etc., p.28.

219. J.M. - "The Nature of the Propitiation," p.14.

of eternal bliss.²²⁰

"To justify" denotes "a judicial act".²²¹ Justification is exactly the opposite of condemnation;²²² the former is to judge to be right or righteous, while the latter is to judge to be wrong or unrighteous. By being justified or condemned, a person is not made inherently righteous or unrighteous, he is merely judged to be one or the other.²²³

God is the great Judge who judges all men; and it is His judgment which decides matters for eternity. If He justifies us, all will be well with us in the end, and forever.²²⁴ Morison makes some definite statements in his writings about this justification taking place when a man becomes a believer.²²⁵ If this is so, we believe that it is impossible to reconcile Morison's statement that a man is justified only once with his doctrine that a man may forfeit the divine forgiveness by allowing his faith to die and then may be restored again by reaffirming his faith. The difficulty becomes even more serious when it is considered that the person who falls away may never be restored because of his continuance in unbelief.²²⁶

It is out of respect to the Propitiator, the Saviour, that God may justify, and does justify the ungodly. The sinner is justified

220. J.M. - "Questions ... Shorter Catechism," Q.33, p.20.

221. J.M. - "Sheves of Ministry," p.306.

222. Ibid., p.307.

223. J.M. - "Commentary on Matthew's Gospel," p.232.

224. J.M. - "Sheves of Ministry," p.308.

225. J.M. - "St. Paul's Teaching on Sanctification," pp.27,28; and "The Nature of the Propitiation," p.15.

226. J.M. - "Commentary on Matthew's Gospel," p.358.

by God through faith in the righteousness of Christ, which takes the place of personal righteousness. God judges the sinner to be right and righteous in Christ.²²⁷ "To be justified," writes Morison, "is to be brought into that state, in which God will treat us, not as we deserve, but as Jesus deserves."²²⁸ The righteousness of Christ furnishes the sinner with a perfect and unchallengeable title to everlasting life, and bliss, and glory.²²⁹ In the "Doctrinal Declaration by the Conference of the Evangelical Union", it is taught that the doctrine of the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to believers "has all along been 'most surely believed'" by the members of the Evangelical Union; and it cannot be denied or explained away without marring the entire scheme of revelation, and rendering many parts of it incapable of any consistent or intelligible exposition.²³⁰

Justification, as we have already hinted, is through faith alone, and is given without any works whatever performed in obedience to any law, ceremonial or moral.²³¹ But, in at least one place, the basis of justification is stated somewhat differently. In a note in the "Gospel Catechism", given to explain 2 Cor. 5:10, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad," Morison says that, inasmuch as none but the holy are meet for glory, it is right that the judgment should proceed according to the character of the judged.

227. J.M. - "Sheves of Ministry," pp.309,310.

228. J.M. - "A Gospel Alphabet," p.21.

229. J.M. - "Sheves of Ministry," p.310.

230. Page 17.

231. J.M. - "Sheves of Ministry." p.310.

The holiness which will be required in this final judgment, however, will not be absolutely perfect holiness. That which will be required will be "gospel holiness", that is, such holiness as imperfect sinners attain by faith in the gospel. "It is thus," declares Morison, "that men must be justified at last ... by their works of faith, and not by faith alone."²³²

In this whole discussion, we have not mentioned "acceptance by God" as an element of the doctrine of justification. This is because Morison repudiates the idea of acceptance as part of the doctrine. He says that it is no part of the function of a judge, in justifying a man, to accept him. The judge pronounces sentence upon a person; but it is not his office to accept that person.²³³

Peace with God

Another of the fruits of faith is "peace with God". "Peace with God" is "that composed state of the heart, in which, by means of the contemplation of the propitiation of Jesus, it feels itself delightfully freed from any agitating dismay at the prospect of meeting a sin-hating God."²³⁴ This peace is gained, not by looking inward upon the state of the heart, or backward upon the course of the life, but outward and upward upon the crucified Christ.²³⁵ It is only the blood of Christ which can give this peace with God; until the sinner sees the blood of Christ shed for him, he cannot

232. Note 140, pp.198,199.

233. J.M. - "The Doctrine of Justification," art. in "The Evangelical Repository," 4th Series, Vol.II, No.7, p.212.

234. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Qs.119,120, p.145.

235. Ibid., Note 92, p.145.

possibly enjoy peace.²³⁶

This peace follows immediately upon belief of the gospel.²³⁷ Morison says that when a sinner believes he cannot help knowing that he believes, and he cannot help knowing that he is at peace with God. The readers of "The Question, 'What Must I Do to be Saved?' Answered" are told to do away with such expressions as "hope I believe", and "think I believe".²³⁸ "The sinner no sooner sees the truth," writes Morison, "than the conscience enjoys a blessed repose."²³⁹

Although Morison makes these extreme statements in his early writings, there appear some qualifications in the records of his defence before the United Associate Synod. He says that he does not wish to be understood as teaching that a believer may never have doubts concerning his salvation. Most believers are at times under the clouds. These doubts arise in the minds of believers from a temporary absence to their minds of the object of faith. Morison has no conception, however, of persons actually engaged in believing the divine testimony, and at the same time actually in doubt as to their interest in Christ. He says that believers may fall into temporary unbelief and consequent darkness and doubt by allowing their attention to be seduced away by Satan and the world from the saving truth of the gospel, and led into sin.²⁴⁰ An even more modified statement concerning "peace with God" appears in the

236. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," p.43.

237. Ibid., p.43.

238. Page 14. (1845 edit.)

239. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," p.44.

240. "Report ... Proceedings ... United Associate Synod ... Cases ... James Morison," etc., p.24.

"Doctrinal Declaration by the Conference of the Evangelical Union". Although it is declared in this work that peace with God is the immediate and invariable result of believing in Jesus, yet it is affirmed also that peace with God is not to be confounded with "full assurance of faith", or "full assurance of hope". These are attainments which some believers have yet to reach. Peace itself admits of degrees, and is subject to interruption. It is peace with God, to the extent of a true and genuine filial sentiment toward God, which is the fruit of a true faith, and essential to sanctification.²⁴¹

Adoption

In his pamphlet, "Questions on the Shorter Catechism", Morison expresses the opinion that adoption should be regarded as a benefit which resolves itself either into justification or sanctification, depending on the view we take of it.²⁴² The result is that Morison does not usually discuss the doctrine of adoption. He does, however, treat the subject briefly in "Saving Faith". He says that as soon as a man becomes a believer, he becomes a child of God. Morison uses the analogy of a nobleman who calls a person his "child" and adopts the person into his family to illustrate what God does to the believer.²⁴³

241. "Doctrinal Declaration ... Evangelical Union," p.18.

242. Q.32, pp.19,20.

243. Pages 44,45.

Regeneration

The "new birth" is the "new creation"; it is the complete spiritual renovation of the sinner's soul.²⁴⁴ When the heart of the believer is regenerated, it is turned from the love of sin to the love of holiness, and it is so transformed that it "hungers" and "thirsts" after righteousness.²⁴⁵ In "Saving Faith", Morison says that a "new heart" is just another name for a "holy heart"; and a holy heart is just another name for sanctification.²⁴⁶ This regeneration is not effected by the Spirit before the sinner believes in the Saviour in order that he may believe on Him. On the contrary, the sinner's faith is necessary to the new birth.²⁴⁷ Regeneration is effected by the Spirit instrumentally, that is, by means of the Word of God.²⁴⁸

Sanctification

Following upon regeneration comes sanctification. A clear definition of sanctification is not given by Morison, but it is apparently considered to be the development with the help of the Spirit of a "blissful moral character".²⁴⁹ In "The Nature of the Propitiation", Morison says that man's reconciliation to God is his sanctification.²⁵⁰

244. J.M. - "A Gospel Alphabet," p.61.

245. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.126, pp.149,150.

246. J.M. - "Saving Faith," p.23.

247. J.M. - "A Gospel Alphabet," p.64; "Saving Faith," Note F, pp.50,51.

248. J.M. - "Apology for Those Evangelical Doctrines," etc., p.75.
(See bibliography)

249. J.M. - "Questions on the Shorter Catechism," Q.32, pp.19,20.

250. Page 23.

Morison combats the heresy of antinomianism with great zeal. He says that the ten commandments have been binding upon men ever since the creation of the race, and they shall continue to be binding until the end of the world.²⁵¹ In his work, "St. Paul's Doctrine of Sanctification", Morison declares that Paul's answer "Μὴ γένοιτο", to the question, "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" means, "Let aversion to such an idea be accentuated to the utmost degree".²⁵² While it is true that believers are not under the law in the sense of being under its curse, they are still under the commanding power of the law.²⁵³ In "A Gospel Alphabet", Morison says that good works are not necessary to procure for the believer a title to heaven, for it is the work of Christ alone that does that; but they are necessary to give "meetness" for glory.²⁵⁴

The question of perfectionism is discussed in the "Gospel Catechism". The language which Morison uses in this work seems to indicate that, theoretically at least, it is possible for every person to become perfect, but that in reality no one attains to this perfection in this life. It should be kept in mind, however, that it is not lack of ability which keeps the believer from reaching perfection, for God has told him that he is to be perfect, and God never would tell him this if he did not already have the ability to attain the perfect state.²⁵⁵

While no believer who is still on earth is entirely free from

251. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.59, p.84.

252. J.M. - "St. Paul's Teaching on Sanctification," p.3.

253. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Note 43, pp.84,85.

254. Pages 89,90.

255. Q.129, p.153.

sin,²⁵⁶ there are some believers who are so fully sanctified by the Spirit that they are said in the Bible to be perfect; and in reality all believers, in contrast with unbelievers, may be said, as to the nature of their character, though not as to its degree, to be perfect in love.²⁵⁷

Election and Reprobation

Fergus Ferguson, in his "History of the Evangelical Union", declares that God raised up James Morison to free Scotland from the doctrine of unconditional election which "brooded like a terrifying nightmare over the Church of the most religious people in the world".²⁵⁸ We have seen, however, that Morison did not give up the doctrine of unconditional election so early as he gave up the doctrine of the limited atonement. It was not until 1843 that he abandoned his belief in unconditional election. We have noticed that in that year he came to the conclusion that such a view of election was out of harmony with the rest of his system. In its place he adopted a view of election which bases the choice of God on His foresight of the exercise of faith by some men.²⁵⁹ The elect, then, are merely Christians, who God foresaw would believe,²⁶⁰ and whom, on the basis of His foreknowledge of their belief, He chose before the foundation of the world.²⁶¹ According to the teaching of Morison, there is nothing to hinder any man, but his

256. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.130, p.156.

257. Ibid., Q.131, p.156.

258. F. Ferguson - "History of the Evangelical Union," p.2.

259. W. Adamson - "The Life of the Rev. James Morison, D.D.," pp. 235,236; and J.M. - "Commentary on Matthew's Gospel," p.444

260. J.M. - "Commentary on Matthew's Gospel," pp.516,517.

261. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.136, p.161.

own wilful unbelief, from becoming one of the elect.²⁶²

Reprobation likewise is conditioned on the foresight of the sinner's continuance in sin and unbelief. Even before his change of theological position in 1843, Morison held that "the unconditional decree of Reprobation is a fearful monster in Theology".²⁶³ Morison writes, "We see no reason at all to believe that there are any who have been from all eternity unconditionally reprobated."²⁶⁴ He insists that only those "who refuse or reject the divine choice are divinely refused or rejected".²⁶⁵

Perseverance

It is the teaching of Morison that while believers are here upon earth, all of the blessings of the kingdom of heaven which are theirs are enjoyed conditionally and provisionally. At any point during the believer's probationary career, his free agency may come in, and put out what is essential to the enjoyment of these blessings. It often does come in, and the result is the man's backsliding, stumbling, and falling away. God provides motives and means to enable the believer to persevere; but if he fails to make use of these and faith fades and dies, the divine forgiveness, which has been conditionally conferred, and provisionally continued, is withdrawn. If the backsliding is not healed, the forgiveness is

262. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.137, p.162.

263. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," p.59.

264. J.M. - "Have We Reason to Believe that Any of the Human Race have been Unconditionally Reprobated to Everlasting Destruction?" art. in "The Evangelical Repository," 1st Series, Vol.III, No.10, p.137.

265. J.M. - "Commentary on Matthew's Gospel," p.444.

never restored.²⁶⁶ The believer has the assurance, however, that if he endures to the end of his period of probation, he "shall be found meet to be everlastingly glorified".²⁶⁷

Part Five.

The Ordinances

God has appointed various ordinances, by means of which His elect ones may grow in holiness, and be made meet to be partakers of heavenly holiness. These ordinances are prayer, Bible study, praise, the communion of the saints, baptism, and the Lord's Supper.²⁶⁸

Prayer

In the "Gospel Catechism". Morison limits prayer to petition and intercession, and declares that adoration, thanksgiving, and confession should be considered as fitting accompaniments of prayer rather than as integral parts of it. His definition, therefore, is: "Prayer is the lifting up of the desires of the heart unto God."²⁶⁹ According to Morison's "Commentary on Matthew", the purpose of prayer is not to give God information. Prayer is the human side of intercommunion with God, the hallowing of the desire by carrying it up to the fountain of holiness, and the consciousness

266. J.M. - "Commentary on Matthew's Gospel," p.358.

267. Ibid., p.176; and J.M. - "A ... Commentary on ... Mark," p. 360.

268. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.138, p.162.

269. Q.139, and Note 108, pp.162,163.

of dependence on God.²⁷⁰ It is not a mere exercise of the mouth or ear, but is an exercise of the heart.²⁷¹

God does answer prayer; and whatever believers in Jesus truly ask, it shall be done.²⁷² Prayer not only has a reflex action on the person who offers it, but it is also a God-appointed condition upon which the conferring of many blessings is suspended.²⁷³

The conditions of effectual prayer are a profound conviction of unworthiness,²⁷⁴ humility,²⁷⁵ a sense of the holiness and majesty of God, and an unwearied perseverance.²⁷⁶ In addition to all of these, and more important than any of them, is the condition that the prayer must be offered in the name of Christ, for whose sake alone we can expect a favourable answer from God.²⁷⁷

The Lord's prayer is "a manner and model of prayer", but it is by no means the only form of prayer which it is lawful for Christians to employ. The Lord's prayer may be profitably used if the spirit of formality is carefully avoided.²⁷⁸

Bible Study

The Bible is able to help us in every possible circumstance; so we should read it as if we were listening to God speaking from heaven, or as if Jesus were talking to us as we walked by His side

270. J.M. - "Commentary on Matthew's Gospel," p.94.

271. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Note 108, p.163.

272. J.M. - "Commentary on Matthew's Gospel," p.352.

273. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Note 109, p.164.

274. Ibid., Q.141, p.167.

275. J.M. - "Commentary on Matthew's Gospel," p.94.

276. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.141, p.167.

277. J.M. - "The Question, 'What Must I Do to be Saved?' Answered," pp.11,12 (1845 edit.).

278. J.M. - "Commentary on Matthew's Gospel," p.95.

in the way. It is important for the spiritual life to read the Bible every day. We are to study the Scriptures in a spirit of devout reverence toward Him who caused it to be written, with a great anxiety to understand what it seeks to teach, and with a determination to be regulated by it in our opinions, principles, and practice.²⁷⁹

Praise

"Praise is the joyful adoration of God for the manifestation which he has made of his exceeding great glory." It is fit and profitable that believers should praise the Lord. Praise is of great value in enabling the soul to admire, adore and rejoice in God. Our praise should be presented to God with our minds fixed upon Him as the great object of our worship and upon Jesus as the Mediator through whom alone our praise can be acceptable. When we sing praises with our lips, we must be careful to make melody with our hearts.²⁸⁰

Communion of the Saints

"The communion of the saints is the holy intercourse which believers have with one another."²⁸¹ It is profitable to the souls of Christians to hold communion with one another; it is not proper for Christians to be "unneighbourly and unsociable". Christians should meet in private companies for holy conversation, prayer, and

279. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.144 and Notes 116,117 and 119, pp.169-172.

280. Ibid., Qs.145,147 and Note 120, pp.172,173.

281. Ibid., Q.148, p.174.

praise, but more especially as a church of Christ. When they have, moreover, met together for purely secular purposes, they should not part without holding some "holy communion".²⁸²

Baptism

In the "Gospel Catechism", Morison calls baptism and the Lord's Supper "symbolical ordinances", and not "sacraments".²⁸³ In the tract, "Questions on the Shorter Catechism", he tells us that the word "sacrament" is an unfortunate word in its theological acceptation, and is altogether unauthorized by Scripture.²⁸⁴ In the "Commentary on Mark", however, he adopts the word "sacrament" himself and defines it as a "sign".²⁸⁵

According to Morison, baptism with water signifies the more glorious baptism - the baptism with the Holy Spirit; and he objects to the statement of the "Westminster Shorter Catechism" that baptism with water "signifies and seals the 'ingrafting of the baptized into Christ'", for Morison holds that, if it does signify and seal this, it must often signify and seal what is not true.²⁸⁶ The emblem of the pure water is used to represent the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon the person of the baptized.²⁸⁷ The mode of baptism which is favoured by Morison is that of sprinkling.²⁸⁸

Through understanding and realizing the important truth represented in the administration of baptism, the benefit of the ordinance

282. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Qs.149,150 and Notes 125,126, pp. 175,176.

283. Qs.151 and 158, pp.177 and 187.

284. J.M. - "Questions on the Shorter Catechism," Q.92, pp.35,36.

285. Page 392.

286. J.M. - "Questions on the Shorter Catechism," Q.94, p.36.

287. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.151, p.177.

288. W. Adamson - "Life of the Rev. James Morison, D.D.," Appendix D., p.436.

is derived. The mere external rite cannot of itself benefit; it is the truth which is couched under it which profits. That is why, as far as adults are concerned, it is administered only to believers.²⁸⁹ Believers should see represented in their baptism the love of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit for them in the coming of the Spirit upon them, and they should also see that the purity symbolized by this washing is the purity which the spirit wishes to impart to their souls.²⁹⁰

The children of believers should receive baptism.²⁹¹ The rite of baptism has taken the place of that of circumcision in the Old Testament. The older rite was administered to children; so there is nothing wrong with administering to them the rite of baptism.²⁹² Morison also declares that Acts 16:14,15 and Mark 16:16 prove that children should be baptized.²⁹³ The benefit which children receive from baptism before they are capable of understanding its meaning, is derived from the benefit which their parents, who understand and realize its meaning, receive. The holy conduct of the father and the mother of the child will greatly benefit the child by way of example.²⁹⁴

The Lord's Supper

"The Lord's supper is a second symbolical ordinance, in which is represented, by the appropriate emblems of bread and wine, that

289. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.153 and Note 128, p.178.

290. Ibid., Q.154, pp.178,179.

291. Ibid., Q.155, p.179.

292. Ibid., Note 129, p.183.

293. Ibid., Note 129, pp.184-186.

294. Ibid., Q.157 and Note 130, pp.186,187.

broken body and that shed blood of the Saviour, by means of which the great propitiation was made."²⁹⁵ "Transubstantiation" and "consubstantiation" are rejected by Morison as refined absurdities. The "is" in the expression "is my body" is to be understood not as "the copula of substantive existence", but as "the copula of symbolical or representative relationship". "The supper," writes Morison, "is a parable to the eye, the touch, the taste." If the believer who communicates would receive the spiritual blessing, he must mentally "transfigure the figure". All believers are to communicate in both elements.²⁹⁶

Part Six.

Eschatology

James Morison has not treated the eschatological doctrines at any great length or with much completeness. It will be possible, therefore, to give only the barest outline of his views.

He teaches that after death the believer and the unbeliever alike must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ who will judge all men according to their true character. All of those who have become holy through faith in Christ's propitiation will be approved of; and those who, through obstinate unbelief, lived and died in their sins will be condemned without mercy. Morison does not attempt to determine when this judgment will take place.²⁹⁷

295. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.158, pp.187,188.

296. J.M. - "Commentary on Matthew's Gospel," pp.582,583 (Summary).

297. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Qs.174,176,178, pp.196,197.

Death ends a man's period of probation.²⁹⁸ Morison affirms that when a man has gone to hell, God will no longer be to him a propitiated God. The moment a person quits this earth an unsaved soul, that moment he commits an unpardonable sin. The sin with which a man dies and dives into eternity was never laid on Jesus, and never will be expiated or forgiven.²⁹⁹

Those who have become holy through faith in the propitiation of Christ will, when they have departed this life, be taken into God's glorious heaven. There they will be glorified with Christ for ever and ever.³⁰⁰ Morison indulges in a flight of the imagination when he discusses what the redeemed will do in heaven. He says that they will doubtless have liberty to go to the various parts of heaven, that is, to the various holy worlds, and to mingle with the holy inhabitants. By their sad story about themselves, and by recounting the glowing narrative about God in Jesus, they will work with the Saviour in forever extinguishing the possibility of sinning.³⁰¹ Morison does not attempt, of course, to give any Scriptural evidence for this.

After discussing the nature of heaven in the "Gospel Catechism", Morison considers the question of infant salvation. We have seen earlier in this chapter the opinion of Morison that the souls of infants are not morally polluted or depraved before they choose evil or refuse good. It follows from this, of course, that all infants, dying in infancy, are saved. Morison says that he

298. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Note 137, p.196.

299. J.M. - "A Gospel Alphabet," pp.51,52.

300. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.180, p.199.

301. Ibid., Note 63, p.109.

abhors and detests the error which teaches that dying infants are "liable to the pains of hell for ever" merely "on account of Adam's first sin".³⁰² While it is true, then, that infants are saved because they are guilty of no sin, there are a number of blessings which those who die in infancy receive from Christ. It is for His sake that they are taken immediately to glory, instead of being put into a state of probation, where they might be tried, as our first parents were tried in Paradise. It is through the propitiation of Christ, that the Holy Spirit will in glory teach the souls of the departed infants the character of God and His relation to them, that they shall be confirmed in holiness forever. For the sake of Christ alone, the bodies of departed infants will be raised from the dead, and will be reunited to their souls, so that they may have the greatest possible blessedness throughout all eternity.³⁰³

Morison says that there is reason to believe "that many of the human race shall experience everlasting destruction". This destruction will not be of the nature of annihilation of personal existence, for moral beings are immortal. The destruction will consist in the annihilation of the harmony and happiness of personal existence.³⁰⁴ This punishment, which the condemned sinner will come to realize he deserves, will be meted out by "the devil and his wicked angels".³⁰⁵

302. "Remarks by James Morison on the 'Doctrinal Errors Condemned by the United Associate Synod, May, 1842," p.2.

303. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Qs.191-193, p.205.

304. J.M. - "Have We Reason to Believe that Any of the Human Race have been Unconditionally Reprobated to Everlasting Destruction?" pp.135,136. (See bibliography)

305. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Note 57, p.100, and Q.182, p.199.

It is the further teaching of Morison that this present evil age will continue until the "dissolution of the world". During all of this time there will be wars and rumours of wars, famines and pestilences.³⁰⁶ While all of this is going on, the gospel will be preached to the whole world.³⁰⁷ As a prelude to the great cosmical change which is to take place at the end of this age, there will be a dreadful tribulation.³⁰⁸ At last the end of the age will come. Then there will be a "new creation"; there will be a "new heaven" and a "new earth".³⁰⁹

As a concomitant of this "regeneration of the earth", there will be a return of the Lord. Every eye shall see Him coming in power and glory.³¹⁰ There will go forth from God an almighty energy which will awake the dead; and the bodies of the dead will be reunited with their souls, so that all men will, both in their souls and in their bodies, be either everlastingly glorified, or everlastingly tormented.³¹¹ All Christians, both those who are alive at Christ's coming, and those whose bodies shall be raised from the dead, will be gathered together, and will become joint-heirs with Christ of His glory.³¹²

306. J.M. - "Commentary on Matthew's Gospel," pp.501,502.

307. Ibid., p. 506.

308. Ibid., pp.523,524.

309. Ibid., pp.502,523,524.

310. Ibid., pp.500,525.

311. Ibid., p. 525; and J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.187, p.203.

312. J.M. - "Commentary on Matthew's Gospel," pp.525,526.

CHAPTER THREE.

MORISON'S VIEWS ON THE NATURE AND EXTENT
OF THE ATONEMENT.

CHAPTER THREE.MORISON'S VIEWS ON THE NATURE AND EXTENT
OF THE ATONEMENT.

James Morison was the central figure in the opening scenes of the Atonement Controversy in Scotland which threatened again and again to disrupt the United Secession Church between the years 1841 and 1845. While it is true that error as to the nature and extent of the atonement was not directly charged against Morison, it was implied; and a discussion of the atonement played a large part in his trials before the Presbytery and the Synod. There can be no doubt that at the heart of the differences between James Morison and some of his brethren in the United Secession Church was a difference of opinion respecting the atonement of our Lord.

Inasmuch, then, as it is the doctrine of the atonement with which the name of Morison is particularly associated, we are, as we intimated when we were presenting the systematic statement of his views in the last chapter, to make a detailed study of his theories of the nature and extent of the atonement. This and the next two chapters will be devoted to considerations of the various aspects of the subject. We shall present a statement of Morison's views with the proof which he offered of them, then we shall endeavour to discover what the influences were which gave rise to these opinions, and, finally, we shall offer some criticisms of his views on the propitiation.

It will be recalled that in our sketch of the life of James Morison we found that it was the extent of the atonement which first set him to devising the system of doctrine which later came to be known by his name. The universality of the atonement became for Morison an undoubted truth, and the other parts of his theology took shape in relation to this. Morison declares that "the universality of the propitiation of Christ" was "the first distinctive tenet that was got hold of; and it was by working it out into its legitimate consequences, or carrying it as a torch throughout the perusal of the Scriptures, that almost all of the other views of the Unionists were attained".¹ This was true even of his view of the nature of the atonement; but for the sake of clarity, we shall consider first the position which he adopted on the nature of the propitiation.

The terminology which Mr Morison uses to set forth his view is, to a great degree, that of the Satisfaction doctrine; but we shall see, as we progress with our exposition, that the meanings which he gives to these terms differ widely from the meanings which they have in the doctrine as it was propounded by the Reformers. The view which Morison sets forth is really of the type which is commonly designated the "governmental theory". That this is a true designation of his position is evident from his definition of the nature of the atonement. "It is an expedient," writes Morison, "introduced into the divine moral government, consisting of the obedience unto

1. J.M. - "Apology for Those Evangelical Doctrines which Maintain and Establish the Freeness of the Grace of God to All," art. in "The Evangelical Repository," 3rd Series, Vol.I, No.1, Sept., 1862, p.4.

death of Jesus Christ, which has completely removed all legal obstacles standing between man and salvation."²

Morison tells us that we learn from the Book of God that the way by which sinners may be saved from the penal and demoralizing consequences of their rebellion had its origin in God's infinite benevolence.³ If God had dealt with sinful men as they deserved, "the sword of his vengeance would have been drunk with the blood" of their bodies and of their souls.⁴ Punishment is due to every sinner for his myriads of sins;⁵ every moment of his life is deserving of hell.⁶ Yet there is mercy with God. The divine heart yearns over the sinner;⁷ and His love for each one is so great that He is not willing that one should perish.⁸

There are, however, difficulties arising from God's moral empire which stand in the way of God's pardoning sinners. It is not as a Father, or as a "Friend", that God needs a propitiation, but as the Moral Ruler and Guardian of the public weal. The propitiation "has exclusive reference to God's rectoral character".⁹ While it is the desire of God, therefore, to avert the punishment which is merited by the sinner, it can be averted only when it can be done with safety to the interests of the divine moral government.¹⁰ "Now, if we shall suppose, as we well may," says Morison in his

2. J.M. - "The Nature of the Propitiation," p.34. (All of the references to this pamphlet are to the edition of 1843.)

3. "Evangelical Union; Its Origin," etc., p.8. (Author of the 'Statement of Principles' in this is James Morison.)

4. J.M. - "Biblical Help," p.57.

5. J.M. - "The Question, 'What Must I Do to be Saved?' Answered," p.3, 1845 edition.

6. Ibid., p.4.

7. J.M. - "Biblical Help," p.57.

8. Ibid., p.181.

9. J.M. - "The Nature of the Propitiation," p.9.

10. J.M. - "Commentary on Matthew's Gospel," pp. 395-396.

article, 'The Christian Propitiation', "that the very conception of sacrificing guilty men according to their desert pained the heart of the Infinite Being, how much more must that holy heart have been pained at the conception of the sacrifice of his own justice, of his own law; and, in the sacrifice of his law, of the weal of his entire moral empire?"¹¹ If God had pardoned sin without a propitiation, the exceeding evil of sin would not have been displayed; the law, which forbids sin, would not have been magnified; the holiness of God, which abominates sin, would not have been cleared; the glory of God, which has been insulted by it, would not have been vindicated; the peace and purity of the inhabitants of the other worlds, which have been endangered by it, would not have been secured; and the full restoration of the sinners themselves to a holy meetness for glory would not have been provided for.¹² In brief, God as the Moral Governor must maintain the efficacy of His laws and the stability of His government; and, consequently, "He can by no means clear the guilty," without a "something" that will as effectually secure the public welfare as the everlasting perdition of the transgressors themselves.¹³

Now all of these barriers to the pardon of sin, arising out of God's relation to us as a righteous Governor, are called "legal obstacles".¹⁴ "'Legal barriers' are, of course, just the barriers to the enjoyment of privileges, which arise from the nature of moral

11. Article in "The Evangelical Repository," Vol.II, No.5, Sept., 1855, p.19.

12. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.94, pp.118-119.

13. J.M. - "The Nature of the Propitiation," p.9.

14. J.M. - Ibid., p.35.

government. They are governmental barriers, - the barriers that lie on the side of the government as distinguished from the side of the governed. They are the barriers that are objective in relation to the governed, as distinguished from the barriers - actual or potential - that are, on their part, subjective."¹⁵ In "The Nature of the Propitiation" Morison gives two examples of what he means by "legal obstacles". The first is taken from the case of fallen angels. Were God to restore these fallen angels to His favour without a propitiation, all of the intelligent creatures in the universe would begin to say that it is not true that God has an infinite respect for the law which He has enjoined, and it is not true that He infinitely abhors sin, for He is bestowing salvation on those beings who have paid no attention to the requirements of the law. It is not true that God has determined to put down everything which tends to destroy the order, harmony, and prosperity of His universe, for He has admitted traitors and rebels to the enjoyment of equal happiness with those who have scrupulously regulated their conduct and feelings by the prescribed rule of right. Why need we obey God's laws, seeing that He does not respect them Himself? The second example is taken from the record of Daniel. When Daniel had offered up his petitions to God in defiance of the unchangeable decree of King Darius, there arose an insuperable obstacle between Daniel and deliverance, even though Darius loved Daniel. By the relation in which Darius stood to his empire and the laws by which it was governed, he was bound to inflict upon Daniel the full amount of

15. J.M. - "Apology for Those Evangelical Doctrines," etc., "The Evangelical Repository," 3rd Series, Vol.I, No.1, Sept., 1862, p.50.

penalty. The necessity of preserving the law and order of his empire thus created "legal barriers" to setting Daniel free.¹⁶

Just such obstacles as these stood between the sinner and salvation; and it was imperative that these constitutional claims of the divinely administered commonwealth be satisfied. Either the transgressors themselves must be punished, or a substitute must be found, whose relations both to the government and the governed were such, that his mediation could be safely admitted.¹⁷

Such a substitute was found, and the moral necessities of the empire demanded that he should suffer in the room of the guilty.¹⁸ If, in the case of Daniel, Darius had been able to discover some expedient which would have satisfied the demands of the government of his empire, Daniel could have gone free. It was because such an expedient could not be found that Daniel had to suffer the penalty himself.¹⁹ This is not true in the case of the sinner; such an expedient has been found by which the "legal barriers" between him and salvation may be removed. "An expedient, a most 'witty invention', has been found out," says Morison, "in consideration of which, God is no longer obliged to visit us with the punishment of our crimes. He can, with perfect honour to his own character, and perfect safety to his government, admit us to his favour." What is this expedient which has completely removed every obstacle arising out of God's character, as a holy and just

16. Pages 35-37.

17. J.M. - "Apology for Those Evangelical Doctrines," etc., "Evangelical Repository," 3rd Series, Vol.I, No.1, Sept., 1862, p.50.

18. Ibid., p.50.

19. J.M. - "The Nature of the Propitiation," p.37.

Governor, that could possibly stand between us and salvation?

"It is the Propitiation."²⁰

How was this propitiation accomplished? First of all, it was accomplished by God's taking our human nature into union with His divinity, and thus becoming a man in the person of Jesus Christ.²¹ This was necessary, for, as we have seen, it was important that the law should be magnified before man's sins could be pardoned, and no one but the Lawgiver himself was able so to honour the law.

It was by both His life and death that Christ magnified the law and rendered "an adequate propitiation".²² The whole of the wonderful work which was done by God's Son in order that the chief of sinners may be saved and glorified, is summed up in the expression, "his obedience unto death, even the death of the cross". This expression has reference not merely to His submission unto death, but also to the whole course of His righteous "doing of the will of God", from His incarnation to His resurrection. The obedience comprises both what He did in His life, and to what He submitted in His death. In other words, it is what some theologians designate the active and passive obedience of Christ.²³

The honour which was thus paid to the law was ten thousand times more convincing than could ever have been demonstrated by the everlasting perdition of the whole rebellious world. Jesus, being

20. J.M. - "The Nature of the Propitiation," p.37.

21. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.90, p.115; "The Christian Propitiation," art. in "The Evangelical Repository," Vol.II, No.5, Sept., 1855, p.20; "Biblical Help," p.57.

22. J.M. - "The Christian Propitiation," art. in "The Evangelical Repository," Vol.II, No.5, Sept., 1855, pp.20,21.

23. J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.88 and Note 66, p.113.

himself God, was above the law. The law was made by Him, and it was made for creatures alone. If all men had obeyed all the precepts of the law forever, the law would have been honoured; and God would have shown His good pleasure, by rewarding us with eternal life. Men have not kept the law, however; and so it would have been perfectly just if God had vindicated His regard for the law by our eternal destruction, as He is now showing His regard for His moral empire by the sufferings of those who are in hell. We have seen, however, that the eternal destruction of men pained our heavenly Father; so the only alternative was for the Lawgiver himself to be made under the law and to honour it with His obedience unto death. God incarnate magnified the law in a far greater way than the eternal compliance to its demands by every creature would have done. By becoming a curse for us, Christ exhibited His own and His Father's ineffable esteem for the righteousness and purity of the law, and their utter detestation "of the SIN 'which is its transgression'".²⁴

By displaying the exceeding evil of sin in this way, the immovable stability of the moral government of God, and "the breadth and length and depth and height of His love",²⁵ Christ has effected a remarkable change in the relation of God and the claims of His law to sinners. God, as the Moral Governor, is now propitiated and satisfied with regard to the sins of men;²⁶ every "legal

24. J.M. - "The Nature of the Propitiation." p.38; and "Evangelical Union, Its Origin," etc., p.8.

25. "Evangelical Union; Its Origin," etc., p.8.

26. J.M. - "The Question, 'What Must I Do to be Saved?' Answered," p.5, 1845 edit.

obstacle" between the sinner and salvation has been removed by the work of Christ.²⁷ The celestial gates, which have been shut against us by our unrighteousness, have once more been opened to us by the propitiatory righteousness of Jesus.²⁸

We have pointed out that it was necessary either for the transgressors themselves to endure the punishment which their sin deserved, or for a substitute to bear it in their stead. We have noted further that such a substitute has been found, and that this substitute is Christ. Throughout his writings, Morison uses this "substitutionary" language. In "The Question, 'What Must I Do to be Saved?' Answered", he addresses every reader with these words: "Every sin then, that you ever committed, are committing, or ever will on earth commit, has already received its punishment in him (that is, Christ).... He bore it, moreover, in your room; he bore it as your substitute."²⁹ Again speaking of sinners in general, he writes in "Biblical Help", "He was self-sacrificed for our sakes, and in our room. Our sins were, by imputation, upon him, and the hand of justice awoke and smote 'the just for the unjust'."³⁰

It must not be thought, however, that by using this language, Morison wishes to convey the idea that Christ became the substitute for the sinners in the sense of paying the full penalty of their sins. If this had been so, all men would have been freed from sin's condemnation, for, as we shall see more fully later, Christ, according to Morison, made atonement for all men alike. Even

27. J.M. - "The Nature of the Propitiation," pp.35 and 37.

28. J.M. - "Biblical Help," p.105.

29. Page 5, 1845 edit.

30. Page 174.

though Morison affirms that since "Jesus suffered what in its effects upon the Divine moral government is assuredly more than equivalent to our own personal endurance of the full punishment of our sins, it may, with the greatest propriety, be said, that our sins have been punished on him",³¹ he does not mean that Christ has borne our punishment in any absolute sense. In a note to the tract, "The Question, 'What Must I Do to be Saved?' Answered", Morison explains clearly what he means by the statement that "all the sins of sinners have been punished in Jesus". "I am to be understood," he writes, "as using popular and not philosophical language ... My meaning ... is simply that the suffering which Jesus endured as our substitute, answered the purpose of vindicating the rectitude of God's law, securing the stability of his moral government, and manifesting his infinite abhorrence of sin, and his righteous determination to punish it, as effectually as if the exact measure and amount of penalty had been endured by the transgressors themselves."³² Christ, then, has merely removed the "legal obstacles" which kept God from pardoning us and saving us without the punishment which is deserved being meted out.³³

It was really a substitute for the penalty, according to Morison, which Christ bore. In "The Nature of the Propitiation", Morison writes, "The debt of my sin was never paid, never (if I perish not) will or can be paid. I trust that instead of being exacted, it will be freely, fully, frankly, and for ever forgiven; and the

31. J.M. - "The Nature of the Propitiation." pp.38,39.

32. Note B, p.16, 1845 edit.

33. J.M. - "The Nature of the Propitiation," p.33.

propitiation of Jesus I regard as a glorious something, which certainly does not make payment of my debts, but in consideration of which they may without payment be pardoned."³⁴ On the same page, he says that the propitiation was a "glorious device" which rendered it right in God to forgive any and every debt, without any payment.³⁵ In answering the charges brought against him by the Presbytery, Morison affirmed that none, even believing sinners, could ever cease to deserve the endurance of punishment.³⁶ Another evidence that Morison did not hold that Christ truly bore our sins is to be found in the statement that the propitiation is a "something" which serves as a sufficient ground on which God might consistently cease from his judicial determination to punish sin.³⁷ Finally, it is made clear that according to Morison Christ did not endure the penalty for the sins of men by the fact that some of those for whom He died ultimately go to hell and endure eternal punishment for their sins.³⁸

Morison spends by far the larger part of his pamphlet, "The Nature of the Propitiation", in proving that the propitiation is not pardon, justification, redemption, and reconciliation. It is evident from what he writes, that not only is the propitiation not to be identified with these blessings, but also that Christ in making the propitiation did not purchase them for those for whom He died. Morison declares that the propitiation is not pardon, but

34. Page 33.

35. Page 33.

36. "Charges Brought Against the Rev. James Morison," p.16.

37. J.M. - "The Nature of the Propitiation," p.27.

38. Ibid., pp.33,38; and J.M. - "Gospel Catechism," Q.172, p.196.

a something on the ground of which all sins and sinners "may" be pardoned. It is not deliverance from the condemnation of the law, but a something on the ground of which all who are under wrath "may" be accepted and treated by God, as if they were as righteous as Jesus himself. The propitiation is not redemption, but a something on the ground of which every miserable captive of Satan "may" be forever emancipated from his accursed slavery. It is not reconciliation, but "a something the moral influence of which is adapted to reconcile sinners" to God, by slaying the enmity of their hearts.³⁹ In the latter part of the tract, Morison says that the atonement has not pardoned any, it has not justified any, it has not reconciled any, and it has not glorified any.⁴⁰

What it has really done is this - it has put all men in a salvable state. It was, as we have seen, designed merely to remove "legal bars"; and it was exhausted in the removal of these bars.⁴¹ By doing this it has put all men in a salvable state, so that God is now able to admit them to further benefits on whatever basis He may determine. In giving his testimony before the Synod, Morison admitted his belief in the view that the atonement merely made the sinner's salvation possible,⁴² and in "The Question, 'What Must I Do to be Saved?' Answered", he affirms that "God's purpose in the propitiation was merely to bring it within the power of all to be saved".⁴³

39. J.M. - "The Nature of the Propitiation," pp.4-27 (Summary).

40. Ibid., p.37.

41. J.M. - "Apology for Those Evangelical Doctrines," etc., in "The Evangelical Repository," 3rd Series, Vol.I, No.1, Sept., 1862, p.52.

42. "Report of the Proceedings of the United Associate Synod ... Cases ... James Morison," etc., p.53.

43. Page 13.

For the reasons which we have given in the last chapter, God has determined to make belief of the fact that all of the obstacles between a man and pardon except his own unbelief have been removed the condition of his forgiveness.⁴⁴ This remaining obstacle - unbelief - has been atoned for along with all other sins, but it has not been removed. It is, however, within the power of every sinner to remove this one remaining obstacle to salvation himself.⁴⁵

The Extent of the Atonement

We have stated again and again Morison's teaching that Christ made a propitiation which atoned for all the sins of all men. The doctrine of the universality of the atonement is truly the stronghold of James Morison and all other Arminians. When other doctrines which are in dispute between them and the Calvinists are under consideration, they must take the defensive; but Morison and those who hold views like his quickly take the offensive when the doctrine of the extent of the atonement is being discussed. For the support of this doctrine, they bring forth an abundance of Scriptural arguments.

Morison begins his tract, "The Ladder to Glory", by telling each reader that the way Abraham and Jacob and David and Paul got up to heaven is still open, and is equally free and equally open to "all flesh". There is no private footpath to heaven.⁴⁶ Every sinner is told in "The Extent of the Atonement" that Jesus has so

44. J.M. - "The Nature of the Atonement," p.39.

45. Ibid., p.35; and "The Question, 'What Must I Do to be Saved?' Answered," p.13. (1845 edit.)

46. J.M. - "The Ladder to Glory," p.1.

died for each one of us all as to have removed all possible legal obstacles between our souls and salvation. Jesus is a propitiation for the sins of each and every one of us. As much was done for each of us on Calvary as was done for Isaiah and Daniel, and Peter and Paul. There was nothing accomplished on Calvary which was not for us all.⁴⁷ Every sinner is addressed by Morison in these words: "All that Jesus did on Calvary he did for you, even for you."⁴⁸ Every sinner is told further that only his failure to believe that all that was done on Calvary was done for him now stands between him and eternal felicity. "It is, then, the love of God to you in giving his own dear Son Jesus Christ to die for you," writes Morison, "that is the saving truth of the gospel which you are called to believe. It is this which is the object of faith, and the subject of 'the record of God'."⁴⁹

Having stated his position in this way, Morison proceeds to attack what he considers three false positions. The first of these is the position of some Calvinists who hold that while Christ died efficiently for only the elect, He also died sufficiently for all. Morison says that it is not enough for a sinner to believe that there is a real sufficiency for his salvation in the atonement, provided God may have happened to have intended it for him. Such an atonement would be of no more value to a sinner than it is to devils, unless it were intentionally made for that sinner. Even though the atonement is infinite in its value, it is insufficient for the sinner's salvation, if God did not design the atonement to be an atone-

47. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," pp.5,6.

48. Ibid., p.6.

49. Ibid., p.6.

ment for his sins, for it has left his sins unatoned for, and it has left unremoved the legal barriers which stand between him and the enjoyment of God's favour. If these barriers were not removed on Calvary, they never will be removed. If they are still left standing, it is as impossible for the sinner to be saved as it is for Satan to pass from hell to heaven. To be of any avail, the atonement must not only be intrinsically sufficient, it must also be made for the sins of each sinner.⁵⁰

In the second place, according to James Morison, it is not enough to believe that Jesus Christ is willing and able to save the sinner, provided the sinner does something for himself. Almost all unbelievers believe this to be true, and they are as far from salvation as they ever were. The willingness and ability of Christ to save sinners cannot, therefore, be the saving truth of the gospel. Christ is not only able and willing to do something for the sinner; He has done something, and it is this something which He has done which the sinner is to believe. A sinner is only warranted to believe that Christ is willing and able to save him when he finds it to be a Bible truth that Christ died for him.⁵¹

The third position which Morison attacks is, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; that his obedience answered the demands of law and justice, so that God is just, even when he justifies the ungodly; that every sinner within reach of the gospel is made welcome to the Saviour, and that, in the way of coming to him, we shall assuredly be welcome." Morison affirms

50. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," pp.6,7 (Summary).

51. Ibid., pp.7,8. (Summary)

that it is not enough merely to believe all this, unless every word of it is strung upon the thread of the universal atonement. Morison knows of no gospel hearer who does not believe that Christ came into the world to save some sinners, but many of these gospel hearers, according to Morison, give evidence of being unbelievers still. There is no value in knowing that Christ came into the world to save some sinners, if the particular sinner does not know that he is among the sinners whom Christ came to save. It is only when the sinner finds out the love of God for him in particular, that he can feel his heart melted in gratitude, and flowing out in love to Him. Morison can find no use for the Bible if it be not that every sinner may search it till he finds out in it that God does indeed love him, and that Christ loved him and gave Himself for him.⁵²

Direct Scripture Evidence in Support of the
Universality of the Atonement

The so-called "universalistic passages" of Scripture provide Morison with most of his evidence for his view of the extent of the atonement. It was through the study of some of these passages, especially the third and fourth verses of the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, that he came to the conclusion that Christ died in the same way for all men;⁵³ and Adamson, one of Morison's biographers, tells us that Morison's further study of the Scriptures confirmed him in his belief in the

52. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," pp.8,9 (Summary).

53. W. Adamson - "The Life of the Rev. James Morison, D.D.." p.57.

universality of our Lord's atonement. This further study was largely an examination of many of the passages in which "universalistic" terms are used.⁵⁴ In the writings of Morison, we find these passages referred to repeatedly; and in "The Extent of the Atonement" and "Vindication of the Universality of the Atonement" he deals with them at length. In this section, we are to consider what Morison has to say about the more important of these passages, and in addition we shall notice briefly what he calls in "The Extent of the Atonement" "indirect Scripture arguments" and his claim to receive support for his doctrine of the universality of the atonement from some of the great teachers of the Church.

(1) The first passage to which attention should be directed is that to which we have already referred specifically and from which we find Morison arguing repeatedly. It is I Cor. 15:1-4: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." Morison says that Paul, in this passage, defines "the gospel of salvation". Paul tells us that the first thing which he preached, when he went among the Corinthians, was this: "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures."⁵⁵ In the opinion of Morison,

54. W. Adamson - Op. cit., p.58.

55. J.M. - "Saving Faith," p.39.

the "our" here cannot mean the believing Corinthians alone, for it is impossible that the gospel which is to be preached to every creature is, "Christ died for your sins, O ye believers". But more than this, it is evident that the "our" cannot be limited to believers, for it was before the Corinthians became believers that Paul declared to them, "Christ died for our sins". It was when Paul first stood up in their midst and made this statement, that they believed and were saved;⁵⁶ so it is clear that by the "for our sins" Paul meant "for your sins, O ye heathen Corinthians, and for mine".⁵⁷ The object of saving faith, then, is not this, "Christ is able to save all who come to him"; but it is this, "Christ died for your sins according to the Scriptures". To every sinner, Morison says, "Christ loved you and gave himself for you".⁵⁸

(2) The second passage is I Tim. 2:1-6, and to this Morison attaches a considerable amount of importance. He says that it is "undoubtedly one of the main pillars in the temple of truth regarding the universality of the atonement".⁵⁹ The passage is as follows: "I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the

56. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," pp.15,16.

57. J.M. - "Saving Faith," p.39.

58. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," p.16 (Summary).

59. J.M. - "Vindication of the Universality of the Atonement," p.16.

truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." Morison declares that Paul, in this passage, enjoins Timothy and the Ephesian Christians, who are under his charge, to pray for "all men"; and the reason which he offers for giving this command is this: "God wills all men to be saved." Inasmuch as there might be some, however, who might be disposed to doubt that "God wills all men to be saved", the Apostle proceeds to give proof that God really does will this. The proof is this: "For there is one God and one mediator between God and MEN, the man Christ Jesus, WHO GAVE HIMSELF A RANSOM FOR ALL." Paul thus assumes the universality of the ransom as a first principle in the Christian scheme.⁶⁰ From it he "deduces that 'God will have all men to be saved'. And from this will of God in reference to the salvation of all men, he deduces that prayers and intercessions should be offered up for all".⁶¹ The universality of the ransom "is the gospel testimony, 'the record which God hath given concerning his Son'".⁶²

Morison recognizes that there are some who believe that this passage teaches that Christ gave Himself a ransom for "all men without distinction", that is, for all classes and descriptions of men; but who deny that it teaches that Christ gave Himself a ransom "for all men without exception". In the opinion of Morison, such an interpretation is not defensible. He affirms that even if it is admitted that only all classes and descriptions of men is meant, a

60. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," pp.10,11.

61. J.M. - "Vindication ... Universality ... Atonement," p.17.

62. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," p.11.

principle implied in Paul's reasoning will necessarily involve the universality of the ransom, for his argument implies that the compass of our prayers is to be limited only by the extent of God's will and Christ's ransom. But no one will deny that it is our duty to pray for all men without exception. It must, therefore, be true that Christ gave Himself a ransom for all men.⁶³

An array of texts is brought forward by Morison to prove that God does "will all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth". Mr Morison writes, "We are explicitly told that 'as the Lord liveth, he hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but (would rather) that the wicked turn from his evil ways and live'. Ezek. xxxiii. 11. God is 'not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance'. 2 Pet. iii. 9. Jesus would fondly have gathered the self-excommunicating Jews together, 'as a hen gathereth her chickens together, but they would not'. Matt. xxiii. 37. And God is assuredly sincere when he invites, and exhorts, and commands, and implores all men everywhere to 'repent', (Acts xvii. 30) and 'be reconciled unto him', (2 Cor. v. 20) and 'believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ'. 1 John iii. 23."⁶⁴

It is pointed out, furthermore, that the Apostle does not enjoin prayer for the abstract ranks, offices, and descriptions of men, but for the "men" in these ranks, offices, and descriptions. If this is not the case, how do we know for whom to pray in the various groups? Besides, it is to be remembered that Paul says

63. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement." pp.11,12 (Summary).

64. Ibid., pp.12,13.

we are to pray "for kings and all that are in authority". If it is admitted that we are to offer up prayers for all in the different ranks, offices, and descriptions, "we will effectually make out the most perfect totality", and prove that it is "all men without exception" for whom we are to pray.⁶⁵ It follows from this, that, inasmuch as we are to make prayers and intercessions for all of the concrete individuals who are in all classes, and inasmuch as our prayers and intercessions are to have such a universal sweep because God will have all in all classes to be saved, the ransom of Christ must have been given for all in all classes. If this is not true, the Apostle's argument, according to Morison, must be "an inverted pyramid"; it must amount to this - "God wishes all in all classes to be saved, for he sent his son into the world to save some."⁶⁶

(3) The next passage is 2 Cor. 5:14,15: "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." In the "Vindication of the Universality of the Atonement", Morison gives what he considers to be the Apostle's meaning in this declaration. He says that Paul is speaking of the great constraining motive which impelled him to his intensely zealous labours on behalf of sinners. Paul says, "For it is love of Christ which constraineth us to these labours,

65. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," pp.13,14; and J.M. - "Vindication ... Universality ... Atonement," p.17.

66. J.M. - "Vindication ... Universality ... Atonement," p.17.

although there be many who think that we are beside ourselves.

It is the love of Christ; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead (or, then all died). We judge, when we consider the fact that one died for all, that all died and are dead because of trespasses and sins; they are dead in law. All are in a doleful plight, and in imminent danger of everlasting misery. And we farther judge that he died for all, that they (of the all) who live, who are quickened through Christ and made alive unto God, should not henceforth live unto themselves, consulting their own carnal ease, but unto him who died for them and rose again, - whose love therefore should constrain them to spend and be spent in winning souls."⁶⁷

While Morison admits that the expression "then were all dead" would be more literally rendered, "then all died", he denies that there is any evidence that the "all" died in Christ. The "then" is logical, not temporal. It follows from the fact that Christ died for all, that all, at one time or another, incurred death for themselves by their trespasses and sins. But when the Apostle adds that "one died for all, that they who live (or, that the living) should not henceforth live to themselves", the expression, "the living", is evidently partitive. It denotes only a part of the "all" who at sometime or other died. While all are dead in trespasses and sins, only those who believe in Christ are quickened. This leads to the conclusion that, inasmuch as Christ died for all and yet not all of the dead are made alive, Christ must have endured

67. J.M. - "Vindication ... Universality ... Atonement," p.15.

death for multitudes besides those who ultimately "live". "The universalities of the passage, and its partitive expression 'they who live'," declares Morison, "cannot be rationally accounted for, except on the hypothesis of an unlimited atonement."⁶⁸

Morison does not believe it is possible to limit in any way the "all" for whom Christ died. He says that if the "all" are not the "men", in verse eleven of the same chapter, whom Paul "persuaded", and the "all who are to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ" (verse 10), he utterly despairs of making sense of the passage, or of being sure about the meaning of any writer whatever. It is certain that the "all" cannot be the "us" who are mentioned in verse fourteen, for the "us" refers either to Paul himself, spoken of, as in other places, in the plural, or to Paul and Timothy. The attempt also to find a reference in the passage to the Jews and the Gentiles, in order to get rid of the universality of the "all", is futile, for the Apostle is writing to a Gentile church, and does not even allude to the Jews.⁶⁹

(4) Let us now consider briefly what Morison has to say about verses nineteen to twenty-one of this same chapter of the Second Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians. The passage is: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled

68. J.M. - "Vindication ... Universality ... Atonement," p.15.

69. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," pp.18,19.

to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Morison says that in these words Paul is describing the "ministry of reconciliation". God was in Christ reconciling no less than the same world of men whom Paul attempted to "persuade", the world of "all men" who are to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ. God was using the death of Christ for "all" as a means of reconciling "all" to Himself, so that it might be "competent" to him, as "the universal Magistrate of the world", "not 'to impute unto them their trespasses'". This was the word of reconciliation which Paul was everywhere to proclaim, and which constitutes the object of saving faith.⁷⁰

"The world" in this passage does not mean "the small company of the elect". Morison asks for proof that the elect are ever called "the world". Even though the expression were sometimes used in this contradictory sense, Morison declares that it cannot be used in this sense here, for it would reduce "the gospel" to this - "God was in Christ reconciling a few unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." Morison asks, "Is this good news to every creature?"⁷¹

It is pointed out by Morison that the word "you" after "beseech" and "pray" is a supplement, and that it is obviously not an accurate one. He holds that either "men" or "the world" must be the correct supplement, for Paul is writing to believing Christians, who are already reconciled to God, and who do not need to be prayed

70. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," p.19.

71. Ibid., pp.19,20.

to be reconciled to Him. This, then, is the argument which the Apostle uses to persuade the impenitent to be reconciled to God: "For he hath made him to be sin for us (that is, for you, unreconciled sinners, and for me), who knew no sin; that we (that is, you, unreconciled sinners, and I) might be made the righteousness of God in him." Morison continues by saying that we have here "the word of reconciliation" which Paul preached to every unreconciled sinner, - "God hath made him to be sin for YOU, who knew no sin; that YOU might be made the righteousness of God in him." In like manner, this is the message which is to be addressed to every sinner in every age.⁷²

(5) "I John ii. 1,2 must ever be regarded," says James Morison, "as one of the great foundationstones of the doctrine of the universality of the atonement."⁷³ The passage is as follows: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." The prime question here is, "Who are meant by 'the whole world'?" Morison says that the elect cannot be meant. He points out that the Apostle is his own best expositor, and we can get some light on this passage from what he says in the nineteenth verse of the fifth chapter of this same book. This verse says, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness."

72. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," pp.20,21.

73. J.M. - "Vindication ... Universality ... Atonement," p.19.

Here "the world" and believers are contrasted; so "the whole world" cannot mean "the whole elect", but must mean all of those who are not "in Christ" but "in wickedness". If, then, the Apostle is allowed to speak for himself, "the whole world" for whose sins "also" Christ became a propitiation must be all of those who are "under the God of this world". If all people are either believers or under the wicked one, there is not one person for whom Christ is not a propitiation. While the Bible often speaks of the non-elect as "the world", it never so speaks of the elect.⁷⁴

Morison believes that it is equally impossible to hold that "the whole world" means the "Gentiles, in contradistinction to the Jews". Morison says it never has been proved, and he does not think it ever will be proved, that the First Epistle of John was addressed exclusively, or even principally, to the Jews.⁷⁵ The testimony of history and the internal testimony of the book are against the view that the epistle was written to the Jews. It is not possible, therefore, that by "the whole world" the Apostle meant to designate the "Gentiles".⁷⁶

Mr Morison seeks to stop the mouths of those who say that "the whole world" in I John 2:2 is to be taken "in a loose and indefinite sense", by asking them if they wish the expression to have this meaning in I John 5:19. Morison inquires further, "By such a

74. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," pp.21,22.

75. J.M. - "The Question, 'What Must I Do to be Saved?' Answered," p.6. (1845 edit.)

76. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," pp.22,23.

principle of interpretation how could the universality of depravity, or the universality of any other thing, be proved by any language whatever?"⁷⁷ Although it is alleged that the same expression is used in this loose and indefinite manner in other passages, Morison contends that this allegation does not support the case of the "Limitarians", for the words translated "world" in Luke 2:1 and in Rev.13:3 are quite different words from that employed in I John 2:2. As for Rom. 1:8, the word "world" does not refer to men in the world as it does in I John 2:2, but to the material world on which men live. Morison explains John 1:10 by pointing out that it is "the world" which is spoken of in this passage, and "the world" is frequently used to mean those who hate Christ.⁷⁸

In the judgment of Morison, I John 2:2 teaches clearly that Christ is a propitiation for everyone who acknowledges that he is part of "the whole world".⁷⁹

(6) Another passage with which Morison deals at length is John 3:16 and 17 - "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." In "Biblical Help", Morison gives the several meanings which the word translated in this passage as "world" had among the Greek-speaking peoples, and he concludes by affirming that its meaning in John 3:16 is "the world of men".⁸⁰ He declares

77. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," p.23.

78. Ibid, pp.23,24 (Summary).

79. J.M. - "The Question, 'What Must I Do to be Saved?' Answered," p.6 (1845 edit.).

80. Page 25.

also that this word "world", when not expressly limited in its scope by the mention of the parties to whom it refers, or when not obviously limited by the nature of the case, must be understood in its simple, unrestricted, universal acceptation.⁸¹ Thus he says in "The Question, 'What Must I Do to be Saved?' Answered", that John 3:16 and 17 tells him that God loves him and gave his own dear Son to die, and to do all for him that he needs;⁸² and in "The Extent of the Atonement", Morison declares unreservedly that "the world" which is loved by God and for which He gave his Son, includes every sinner.⁸³

In connection with this passage, Morison once more endeavours to show that "the world" cannot be limited to "the elect". In "Biblical Help", he admits that the word "world" and even the expression "the whole world" are sometimes used hyperbolically with a limited reference. As an illustration of the hyperbolical use of the latter, he gives John 5:19, in which it is obvious that the word "world" means less than all men. While admitting this to be true, Morison insists that the word is never, when thus bearing in its import a limitation, used to designate those who are "not of the world", but are "chosen out of the world". In other words, it is never used as a synonym for "the elect".⁸⁴

In the opinion of Morison, it is evident that the word "world" cannot mean "the elect" in this verse, for "the world" which God so loved is much wider than the company of those who ultimately believe.

81. J.M. - "Biblical Help," p.25.

82. Page 12 (1845 edit.).

83. Page 26.

84. Pages 26,27.

This is clear from the "whosoever" which indicates that all of "the world" will not believe. Thus "the world" cannot be "the elect", for then the passage would teach that only some of the elect will ultimately believe. "The world", which God loved and for which he sent his Son, is the same as that spoken of in verse seventeen. God so loved "the world" that he gave his only begotten Son, that "the world through him might be saved". God "wills all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth". That it cannot be an "elect world" which God is here represented as so loving as to "will it to be saved" is made certain by a consideration of the parallel passage in John 12:47, where it is said, "If any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world." The "world" which Jesus came "not to judge" is obviously a world which includes those "who believe not", and it is the same world which Jesus "came to save".⁸⁵

(7) A passage which is very much like the last one is I. Timothy 1:15, - "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Of this passage, Morison says in "The Extent of the Atonement", "I defy all hell to steal my name out of this 'faithful saying'".⁸⁶ In another place, Mr Morison declares that God names every person when He says that "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners".⁸⁷ The word "sinners" does not conceal beneath it the word

85. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," pp.25,26 (Summary).

86. Page 26.

87. J.M. - "The Question, 'What Must I Do to be Saved?' Answered," p.7 (1845 edit.).

"elect". There is no mental reservation in the word; it is no respecter of persons. There is no word more universal than "sinner" and no thing more universal than "sin", but they are no more universal than the "work" which Christ came into the world to "finish".⁸⁸

(8) We shall consider next Morison's interpretation of I John 5:10,11: "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son; and this is the record, that God hath given unto us eternal life; and this life is in his Son." As far as we have been able to discover, Morison has dealt with this passage only in "The Extent of the Atonement". According to his interpretation given there, the passage teaches that if a man does not believe that "God hath given to him eternal life in Christ Jesus" he "makes God a liar". The word "us" in verse eleven means "us mankind-sinners as such". This is evident from the fact that the statement, "God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son," is "the record" which every sinner is commanded to believe, and by the disbelief of which he makes God a liar. Now only a sceptic disbelieves that "God has given to believers eternal life"; and inasmuch as the testified gospel is something "to every creature", it cannot be this, "God hath given eternal life to all believers". So the "us" must be "mankind-sinners as such". God says, "I have given thee eternal life, and this life is in my Son." "No," says the unbeliever, "it is a lie." He that believeth not hath made God a liar. If there is, then,

88. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," p.27 (Summary).

eternal life in Jesus Christ for all, He must have procured it for all, otherwise all would not make God a liar by not believing the record.⁸⁹

Thus it is the denial of the truth that God has already given eternal life to every one of us that constitutes a man an unbeliever. This does not mean, however, that all will be saved, for if a man does not believe that eternal life is already given or made over to him, he will not take the gift which God offers.

(9) Another passage which Mr Morison claims as lending support to his doctrine of the universality of the atonement is Luke 2:10,11: "And the angel said unto the shepherds, Fear not, for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." Morison affirms that what the angel said to the shepherds of Bethlehem, he might have said to any of the shepherds of Judea, for unto all of them a Saviour was truly born that day. The expression, "to all people", should be rendered "to all the people", for it refers to the Jewish nation alone. But even if the "good tidings of great joy" were for all the Jewish people, it must be true that to many besides the elect a Saviour was born that day. Furthermore, there is no difference to-day between the Jew and the Gentile; so if it was true that unto every one of the Jews a Saviour was born, the same must have been true of every one of the Gentiles. Unto every sinner was born that day a Saviour.⁹⁰

89. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," pp.28,29 (Summary).

90. Ibid., pp.30,31. (Summary)

(10) The last of the expositions to which we shall turn our attention is that which Morison gives of 2 Peter 2:1: "There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." Morison holds that it is not a temporary error into which these false teachers shall fall, for they shall "bring upon themselves swift destruction", and shall be delivered into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment. (See verse 4) If these, then, whom the Lord has bought, may fall away forever, the sinner may learn from this passage that the Lord has also "bought" him.

Morison says that it will not do to try to evade the force of this conclusion by asserting that the word translated "Lord" is not the one commonly used when Christ is spoken of, for the same word is used of Christ in the fourth verse of Jude. Nor will it do to say that the word "Lord" refers to God the Father "who bought the Jewish nation out of Egypt" (Deut. 32:6), for if this is true, there are a number of impossible suppositions which must follow. It must be supposed that the Apostle is predicting a "damnable heresy" of which it is not possible for Gentiles to be guilty. It must be supposed that the Apostle is addressing only Jewish converts in this epistle. It must be supposed that it was really God the Father and not God the Son who effected the deliverance of the Jews from their oppressors in Egypt. And it must be supposed, finally, that it may be said centuries after this, that certain individual Jews were "bought by the Lord" because the ancient Jewish nation, as a nation, were redeemed out of the house of bondage.

Many, who find this explanation impossible, maintain that the Apostle is here speaking of "teachers of damnable heresies" who will pretend to be followers of Christ. Morison declares that this will not do either, for far from making a profession of faith in Christ, the text says that they will deny the Lord that bought them. If it is held that the Apostle is describing them according to the profession which they will make before their apostasy, his phraseology is such that no plain man could ever do more than guess his meaning. The Apostle does not say, "even denying the Lord, by whom they once professed to have been bought"; but he says expressly "even denying the Lord that bought them".⁹¹

The exposition is concluded with these words: "Nothing, O sinner, can be clearer than this - Jesus Christ has bought you with his innocent blood.... The price is paid for you, the blood is shed for you, the work is finished for you, the glory is waiting for you, but it lies with yourself whether or no you will believe all this, and God's love infolded in it, or count it all 'the baseless fabric of a vision', and forcibly effect your own murder and damnation."⁹²

These are the principal expositions of individual passages of Scripture which James Morison has given to prove the truth of his doctrine of the universality of the atonement. In many of his works, we find large numbers of "universalistic passages" quoted, and in some instances brief remarks are made on them; but we believe that the expositions which we have presented in detail are

91. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," pp.32,33 (Summary).

92. Ibid., p.33.

typical of those which Morison would have us apply to the other passages.

Indirect Scripture Evidence in Support of the
Universality of the Atonement

In addition to the direct evidence which is to be found in Scripture to support the universality of the atonement, there is also, according to Morison, some indirect evidence. The latter includes those truths of revelation which do not directly assert the doctrine, but which involve, imply, and presuppose that Christ died for all. We shall present in summary form each of the indirect arguments which Morison gives in "The Extent of the Atonement".

(1) Morison maintains that the universality of the atonement must be true, for God is sincere when he invites, urges, implores, and commands all to "come and take" salvation, as freely given to all in Christ Jesus. Many passages in which God urges, invites, commands, and so forth are given - John 6:32; Isaiah 55:1; Rev. 22:17; John 7:37; I John 3:23. It is the contention of Morison, that, if an atonement has not been provided for all in Christ, God cannot be sincere when He invites all, for He is inviting many to accept what has no existence at all. Surely this cannot be. Furthermore, if for his salvation every gospel hearer is to believe that Christ is his, and that he shall have life and salvation by Him, and that whatsoever He did for the redemption of mankind He did for him, that gospel hearer for whom Christ did nothing on the cross is urged and commanded to believe a lie. If it be true that

every man's sin would be pardoned, and every man's soul would be saved, provided he believed and repented, it must also be true that atonement has been made for every man without exception. Believing and repenting of themselves could no more secure the salvation of Peter, than they could secure the salvation of Satan.⁹³

(2) The next argument is from the nature and object of faith. It will be recalled from Chapter Two that faith, according to Morison, is but the assent of the mind to the credible report of an honest and well-qualified witness. The gospel report is God's testimony, and certainly God is a witness whose testimony is infinitely above suspicion. The believer, then, is one who sets his seal that God is true; and the unbeliever, on the other hand, is one who charges God with being a liar.

In "The Extent of the Atonement" Morison writes, "If this be the nature of faith, and the nature of unbelief, it will readily be perceived that the thing which the sinner is invited, urged, implored, and commanded to believe must be a thing that is true, whether he believe it or no."⁹⁴ When the sinner, therefore, is commanded to "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, that he may be saved", it must be understood that he is to believe to be true what God says about Christ. Now what is it that God says about Christ which is to be believed by the sinner in order that he may be saved? The testimony to be believed is - "Christ loved every sinner and gave himself for every sinner, and therefore for me."⁹⁵

93. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," pp.38,39 (Summary).

94. Page 41.

95. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," pp.42,43 (Summary).

(3) The third argument for the unlimited extent of the atonement is, that the gospel is "good news to every creature" (Mark 16:15, Luke 2:10). If the atonement is not universal, however, it cannot be "good news to every creature".⁹⁶

(4) The universality of the atonement is argued in the fourth place from the fact, that peace of conscience "passing all understanding", immediately follows belief of the gospel (Rom. 15:13). Morison says that a sinner cannot get peace until he sees that the blood of Jesus was shed for him. The belief of the gospel, however, brings peace immediately; and as it is the truth believed which fills the sinner with peace, the truth must be this - "Christ loved me and gave himself for me."⁹⁷

(5) The fifth indirect argument for the universality of the atonement is, that all Christians do know and say, "Jesus loved me and gave himself for me". Morison holds that a man is not warranted to say this merely because he is a Christian, but he is warranted to consider himself a Christian because he does say it. It is the love of Christ which melts the heart, and leads the sinner to love the Lord. But if the sinner can find no certain evidence in the Bible that Christ died for him, he can have no more certain evidence that God loves him than devils have; and if he can get no certain evidence of this, what is to melt his heart?⁹⁸

(6) The next argument is from the fact, that nothing but unbelief now stands between the sinner and salvation. It is admitted

96. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," p.43 (Summary).

97. Ibid., pp.43,44 (Summary).

98. Ibid., pp.44,45 (Summary).

by all men, that, if every sinner would believe, every sinner would be saved. If, then, there is really nothing but unbelief standing between the sinner and salvation, every sinner's sin must have been atoned for. It must be true that the obstacles which arise from God's justice and government have been removed and removed for all, for the only obstacle to any man's salvation is unbelief. If the atonement which removes the "legal barriers" has not been made for all, to the salvation of some men there are other obstacles besides unbelief.⁹⁹

(7) The universal extent of the atonement is argued "from the fact which will be admitted by all, that the non-elect have a greater interest in Christ, and relation to him, and hope from him, than devils have". There is "peace on earth", though there is none in hell; there is good-will toward men, though not toward devils. If, however, Christ did nothing for the non-elect to render it possible for them to escape damnation, they have no more interest in him, relation to him, or hope from him than devils have. This is evident, for they can have no interest, relation, or hope at all. If it is admitted that they have, it must be admitted also that Christ did something for them, and that this something makes it possible for them to escape the pains of hell, for Christ did nothing on Calvary for sinners but make atonement for sin.¹⁰⁰

(8) "But I would again argue the extent of the atonement," writes Morison, "from the fact that its extent is spoken of by the inspired writers, in language very different from what they employ

99. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," p.45 (Summary).
 100. Ibid., p.46 (Summary).

when they speak of election, effectual calling, justification, sanctification, and glorification." One would not expect this to be true if the limitarian scheme were true, for according to that scheme the atonement is exactly measured by the extent of these other blessings. The fact is, however, that while we read of Christ making atonement for "men", for "all men", for "the whole world", and even for those who deny him and bring upon themselves swift destruction, we never read of such terms with reference to election, effectual calling, justification, sanctification, and glorification. This difference can be accounted for only by recognizing that "the atonement stretches out far beyond the compass of the actual blessings which are drawn out of it".¹⁰¹

(9) Morison affirms also that the duty of every Christian to look upon himself as having by his sins "pierced the Saviour", proves that the atonement must be universal, for if Christ did not die for the sins of all men, the sins of some men did not pierce Him.¹⁰²

(10) The nature of the institution of the Lord's Supper, according to Morison, gives us further evidence of the truth of the doctrine of the universality of the atonement. "The Lord's Supper," writes Morison, "is purely an emblematical ordinance ... It is THE WHOLE GOSPEL IN AN EMBLEM." The Supper, furthermore, is symbolical of our "belief of the gospel"; and so it must be true that there is nothing shadowed forth in the ordinance which it is not the duty of every man to believe, for it is the duty of every

101. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," pp.46,47 (Summary).

102. Ibid., pp.47,48 (Summary).

man to believe the gospel. What is it, then, that the partaker is bound to believe when he receives the elements? He is bound to believe that Christ's body was broken for him, and that Christ's blood was shed for him. Now there is not, according to Morison, one gospel for believers and another for unbelievers. If, then, this emblematical ordinance tells the believer that Christ's body was broken for him, it must tell the same to all others.¹⁰³

(11) Morison attempts to prove the truth of his position on the extent of the atonement from the immense difficulty of getting into Christ on any other principle. If a man does not believe that the body of Jesus was broken for him in particular, and that His blood was shed for him in particular, he cannot have assurance and peace. If Christ died for only a limited number, how can a man know that he is among that number, unless he is provided with a private Bible which tells him that he is among the elect? Morison says that he knows that Christ died for him, but he knows this only because it is plainly declared in Scripture that He died in the same sense for all men. In Morison's opinion, a man can have assurance only when he has as the object of his faith the testimony that he is among those for whom Christ died; so it is not sufficient to tell him that "Christ came into the world to save sinners", or that "He came into the world to save sinners indefinitely". By believing either of these a man cannot get assurance, for he cannot know, in the one case, if he is among the "sinners", and, in the other, he cannot be sure that he is in the "indefinite number".

103. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," pp.48,49 (Summary).

Peace can come to the sinner only when he is assured that Christ died for him in particular.¹⁰⁴

These are the indirect arguments with which Morison deals most at length. He says that it will surely be admitted that he has given an abundance of evidence to support his doctrine of the unlimited extent of the atonement. "All Scripture," he writes, "is vocal with it; all scriptural theology proclaims it. The tongues of prophets sang of it, the tongues of apostles preached it, the ordinances of Christ confirm and perpetuate it, and the blessed experience of saints most clearly attests it.... It seems to me to be the centre of the Christian system, and at once the foundation and the keystone of the Christian's hopes."¹⁰⁵

Additional Observations

In the closing chapter of his pamphlet, "The Extent of the Atonement", Morison attempts to answer the objection that his doctrine of the universality of the atonement is an almost unheard of heresy and a novel and upstart opinion.¹⁰⁶ He declares that he would believe the doctrine if he saw it clearly revealed in Scripture, even if this objection which is raised against it were true. On the contrary, however, just the reverse is true; the doctrine of the universality of the atonement goes all the way back to the first century of the Christian era, and this, strangely enough, is more than can be said for the doctrine of a limited atonement. This latter doctrine, contrary to the generally

104. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," pp.49,50 (Summary).

105. Ibid., p.52.

106. Ibid., p.72.

accepted view, was not heard of during the first three centuries, nor, in reality, for about two hundred years after that. Morison quotes Davenant as holding the opinion that before the dispute between Augustine and Pelagius the question of the extent of the atonement was not raised. Davenant affirms that the Fathers speak of Christ as having endured death for the redemption of the whole world; and he says further that there does not occur a word among the Fathers of the exclusion of any person by the divine decrees. The Fathers agree that it is actually beneficial to those only who believe, yet they everywhere confess that Christ died on behalf of all mankind.¹⁰⁷ Davenant is quoted again as saying that even Augustine and his disciples would never be the patrons of the doctrine that Christ died for the predestinate alone.¹⁰⁸

Morison continues his observations by declaring that even after Augustine the doctrine of a limited atonement was but slowly propagated, and for long but partially received. He points out that Godeschalchus, who taught a limited atonement, was condemned by the Synod of Mentz, and afterwards by Hincmar, Archbishop of Rheims; and that from this time henceforward there was continual controversy on the subject. Then during the days of the schoolmen, while it was generally held that Christ died for all sufficiently, but for the elect efficiently, it was admitted that he died for all in some sense.¹⁰⁹

As his next witness, Morison calls Martin Luther, whose "Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians" is quoted to prove that

107. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," p.73 (Summary).

108. Ibid., p.74.

109. Ibid., pp.74,75 (Summary).

the great Reformer held that Christ died for all.¹¹⁰ From Luther, he turns to none other than John Calvin, the very one after whom the "Limitarians" have called themselves. Morison writes, "Calvin, though in early life a keen advocate apparently of a limited atonement, seems to have completely veered round and changed his views in his riper years. No man can assert more clearly than he does, that 'Christ died for all mankind', and 'for the whole human race'. Calvin himself thus disowns those who often put on the livery of his name."¹¹¹ Quotations from several of Calvin's commentaries are given to prove the truth of these statements. Morison writes, "On John 1:29, 'behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world', instead of dwarfing the word 'world' into elect, he (Calvin) remarks, 'when John says the sin of the world, he extends this favour indiscriminately to the whole human race'." Morison points out that on Rom. 5:18 Calvin writes, "Christ suffered for the sins of the whole world;" on Col. 1:14, "Redemption was acquired by the blood of Christ; for by the sacrifice of his death all the sins of the world were expiated;" and on Mark 14:24, "When, therefore, we approach to the sacred table, not only let this general reflection come into the mind that the world was redeemed by the blood of Christ, but let each for himself think that his own sins were expiated."¹¹² To these testimonies of Luther and Calvin to the universal extent of the atonement, Morison adds those of Bullinger, Becon, Usher, Polhill, Scott, Dwight and Bellamy of

110. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," pp.76-81 (Summary).

111. Ibid., p.82.

112. Ibid., p.82.

America, Robert Hall, and J. A. James. He says that all of these, and the evangelical Lutherans and the large proportion of the English and Scottish Independents and Baptists have held or do hold to the universality of the atonement of Christ.¹¹³

We cannot do better in bringing to a close this chapter on Morison's views on the atonement than by quoting the affirmation which he makes toward the end of "The Extent of the Atonement". "I must ... tell all unreconciled sinners without exception that 'God made Christ to be sin for them that they might become the righteousness of God in him', 2 Cor. v. 20. I must go back and take up the method of 'winning souls', which the Holy Spirit himself laid down and blessed, and tell this gospel to every creature - 'Christ died for YOUR sins according to the Scriptures'."¹¹⁴ This is the heart of the message of James Morison and it is this which he loved to proclaim from the beginning of his ministry until its close.

113. J.M. - "The Extent of the Atonement," pp.83-88 (Summary).

114. Ibid., p.92.

CHAPTER FOUR.

THE INFLUENCES WHICH LED MORISON TO ADOPT HIS
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There were three principal streams of influence which led Morison to abandon the theological position of his fathers on the doctrine of the atonement of our Lord, and to become the leader in a movement of theological thought in Scotland which went further and further from the Calvinistic position. There was, in the first place, a liberalizing tendency at work in the political and economic spheres. The second influence came in the form of a wave of revivalism which swept over Scotland during the last years of the preparation of Morison for the ministry of the United Secession Church. At the same time, there was on foot a theological movement, which tended strongly in the direction of modifying the Calvinistic position of the "subordinate standards" of the Presbyterian churches of Scotland. All of these had their part to play in leading Morison to abandon the thoroughgoing Calvinism of the Westminster standards, and to adopt a modified form of Calvinism. In this chapter, we are to consider the contribution which each of them made in bringing about this change.

1. The Political and Economic Influence

We shall consider, in the first place, the influence which the political and economic outlook of the second and third decades of the last century had on the rise of "Morisonianism". It can

be truly said of the movement which was started by James Morison that it was a genuine offspring of its age. In the decades which we have mentioned, the common people were becoming more and more discontented with their lot, and they were crying out for justice. The Owenite propaganda, which began seriously in 1834, was welcomed by the workers as a revelation. Among other things, these followers of Owen advocated the control of the productive processes of the country by the workers themselves.¹ Then came the Chartist movement, which in 1837 demanded universal suffrage, electoral districts, and the removal of the property qualifications.² The conviction was thus becoming ever more and more firmly established in the minds of the common people that they did not exist merely for the advancement of the privileged classes, and that women and children had slaved in the mines too long, while the capitalists had become richer and richer. A greater degree of equality was the demand.

To a considerable extent, the demand was granted. The Catholic Emancipation measure was passed in 1829.³ By the Reform Bill of 1832, Scotland was given a degree of representation which was something like a reality. Fleming writes, "The predominant radical tendency of the country ever since is largely due to the rebound from the despotic government that fettered so long the free genius of the people."⁴ Slavery within the British Colonies was abolished

1. G. P. Gooch - "Great Britain and Ireland (1832-41)," art. in "The Cambridge Modern History," Vol. X, Chap. XX, p. 682.

2. Ibid., p. 683.

3. Henderson - "The Religious Controversies of Scotland," pp. 182, 183.

4. J. R. Fleming - "A History of the Church in Scotland, 1843-1874," p. 2.

in 1834; and in that year also the Poor Law was passed. In the following year the rights of the municipalities were restored; and the foundations of a system of national education were laid in 1839. "Brotherhood, equality, and fair-play were clamouring loudly at every closed door, and refusing to be turned away."⁵

This liberalizing spirit of the age dominated the thought of the people; and it is not to be wondered at that current political and economic opinions influenced the thinking of some men in the realm of Christian doctrine. Ferguson, in his "History of the Evangelical Union", declares that the popular dissatisfaction, which had manifested itself in opposition to legislative inconsistencies, "had pre-disposed multitudes of the working classes to see similar inequalities in the national creed, and to welcome as a friendly innovator and Liberator any divine who would reform religion, and sweep away the appearance of partiality and the 'respect of persons' from the decrees of God";⁶ and we believe that, to a great degree, this judgment is sound. In another place, Ferguson writes, "Untaxed bread for all; liberty for all; a suffrage for all - these have been popular political cries. Not less is a Saviour for all - if men were only set free from theological leading-strings."⁷

The spirit of the age found a lodging place, we believe, in the minds of Morison and of those other theologians who, as we

5. H. F. Henderson - Op. cit., p.183 (Summary).

6. Page 30.

7. "History of the Evangelical Union," p.105.

shall see, profoundly influenced him. In our opinion, it played a great part in leading Morison to break with the past, and to seek to give a new direction to theological thought in Scotland. The love of God for all men without exception is, as we have seen, at the heart of his message; and his attacks are directed against those doctrines which in any way tend to limit the extent of this love.

2. The Influence of Revivalism

About the time that James Morison went north to serve as a probationer in Cabrach, a wave of revival excitement, which had for some time been sweeping over Scotland, reached a great height. The reports on the subject of revivals which came from America, together with accounts of extraordinary awakenings which were taking place in various parts of Scotland, but especially at Kilsyth, served to arouse the churches to a deeper sense of obligation to win souls for Christ.⁸ Among the Independents, Messrs Wight, Pullar, Mackray, and Cornwall were holding "protracted meetings" in many cities and towns in Scotland.⁹ The United Secession Church also welcomed with enthusiasm these manifestations of spiritual interest; and the proceedings of the Synod of 1840 contain reports from six presbyteries concerning the awakenings which had taken place within their bounds.¹⁰ At the request of the United Associate Presbytery of Edinburgh, Dr John Brown prepared

8. A. Robertson - "History of the Atonement Controversy," p.160.

9. F. Ferguson - "History of the Evangelical Union," p.7.

10. A. Robertson - Op. cit., p.160.

and delivered before that body in the autumn of 1839 an address entitled, "Means and Manifestations of a Genuine Revival of Religion", in which he embodied a Scriptural estimate of the subject, founded upon the experience of Pentecost.¹¹ Dr Ralph Wardlaw, in his lecture, "The Revival of Religion", delivered in 1841, remarked that for some time past the revival of religion had been occupying the thought, conversation, and attention of Christians.¹²

This spiritual awakening enlisted the energies of the younger ministers of the churches. The new spirit certainly made a deep impression upon young James Morison as he set out from home to engage in the work of the Lord in the North. Adamson says that this new spirit which filled Morison "was greatly increased by studying Finney's 'Lectures on the Revival of Religion', which he read with avidity when on the journey north, and after reaching his destination ... So much was he stirred by the lectures of Finney that he wrote to his father: 'I do strenuously advise you to get Finney's Lectures on Revivals, and preach like him; I have reaped more benefit from the book than from all other human compositions put together. It has faults, but its excellencies are very extraordinary'."¹³ Young Morison was fired with an even greater zeal by the letters which he received from his father about the truly wonderful work of the Burns family at Kilsyth and about the other awakenings

11. Summarized from the "Preliminary Notice" and the "Author's Preface" of "Revival of Religion" by J. Brown, D.D., pp.xi and xiv, 3rd edition, and "Memoir of John Brown, D.D." by J. Cairns, pp.349,350.

12. Page 5.

13. W. Adamson - "The Life of the Rev. James Morison, D.D.," p.55.

of spiritual life which were manifesting themselves on all sides.¹⁴

All of these factors filled the young probationer with a desire to be used of God to bring about a revival in the desolate country to which he had been sent. While he rejoiced that souls were entering the kingdom of God in other places, he prayed that God would use him to bring lost souls from darkness into light in the region in which he laboured. To this end, he sought to put into practice the principles which he had learned from the lectures of Charles Finney.¹⁵

In our opinion, the evangelistic fervour of Morison played a large part in his defection from the confessional teaching of his Church. Fleming writes of Morison, "In his evangelistic zeal he simply felt bound to preach a gospel free from limitation."¹⁶ It cannot be doubted that James Morison felt hampered by the doctrine of his Church when he began his early evangelistic efforts. Nor can it be doubted that his difficulties led him to seek some way in which he might tell every man, "Christ died for you".

There is also another way in which we are able to discover the influence which revivalism had on the theological position of James Morison. As soon as he became convinced that Christ's work was a finished work for all men, he began to preach this doctrine with zeal and earnestness. His efforts were crowned with immediate success; in every centre in which he served in the North a revival sprang up. The wave of religious enthusiasm which followed the

14. W. Adamson - "The Life of the Rev. James Morison, D.D.," p.59.

15. Ibid., p.55; and O. Smeaton - "Principal James Morison," pp. 58,59.

16. "History of the Church in Scotland (1843-1874)," p.10.

preaching of the universality of the atonement of Christ convinced Morison that he had discovered the truth. The revivals of religion, then, gave rise to Morison's views on the atonement by leading him to look for a message which would include all men as the objects of God's love and of Christ's atoning work. In addition to this, however, the revivals gave him the assurance that God was with him when he proclaimed these newly-discovered truths.¹⁷

3. The Theological Influence

We turn, in the third place, to a consideration of how a stream of theological thought, dating from the early part of the seventeenth century, led James Morison to adopt the "governmental theory" of the nature of the atonement and the theory of "hypothetical universalism" with regard to its extent. We are limiting ourselves to a consideration of his earlier view on the extent of the atonement, because we have already dealt in Chapter One with the influences which led Morison in 1843 to adopt a thoroughgoing Arminian position. Thus the only writings of Morison with which we are concerned here are "The Question, 'What Must I Do to be Saved?' Answered", "The Nature of the Atonement", "Not Quite a Christian", and "The Extent of the Atonement". We shall be concerned, of course, with only those editions of the first of these which were published before Morison adopted Arminianism. In addition to these, the earlier views of Morison are to be found in the reports of the proceedings of his trials before the Presbytery and Synod.

17. W. Adamson - Op. cit., pp.59-77 (Summary).

Our investigation into the sources of Morison's views on the atonement has led us to conclude that these views go back by a circuitous route which passes through several countries to that learned Dutch jurist, Hugo Grotius, and probably also to Moyse Amyraut, Professor of theology in the University of Saumur. In the pages which follow, we shall give first of all a brief statement of the theologians who influenced Morison, beginning with those contemporaries who had an immediate influence upon him, and tracing the line of influence back to Grotius and Amyraut. Then, beginning with these two theologians and moving forward to Morison, we shall seek to prove in some detail that the line of influence which we have given in summary form is the true one.

In different ways and in varying degrees, we believe that Dr John Brown and Dr Robert Balmer, two of Morison's teachers in the Theological Hall, and Dr Ralph Wardlaw in the Theological Hall of the Scottish Congregational Church, were immediately responsible for introducing Morison to the governmental theory of the atonement and to a modified form of Calvinism. We shall see later something of the contribution which each of these made. These three men in turn were influenced in their theological thought by a group of English Baptists and Congregationalists. These English theologians included Andrew Fuller (1754-1815), Robert Hall (1764-1831), George Payne (1781-1848), Edward Williams (1750-1813), Joseph Gilbert (1779-1852), John Pye Smith (1774-1851), and T. W. Jenkyn. We must now cross the Atlantic to New England, for the group of theologians, who came to be called "The New England School", were responsible for leading the British Nonconformists, of whom we have

spoken, to adopt a modified form of Calvinism and the governmental theory of the atonement. Among these New England theologians were Joseph Bellamy (1719-1790), Samuel Hopkins (1721-1803), Timothy Dwight (1752-1817), Jonathan Edwards, Jr. (1745-1801), Nathaniel Emmons (1745-1840), Leonard Woods (1774-1854), Edward D. Griffin (1770-1837), Moses Stuart (1780-1852), Nathaniel W. Taylor (1786-1858), Charles G. Finney (1792-1875), and William R. Weeks. These New Englanders were acquainted with that important theological work of Grotius, "Defensio Fidei de Satisfactione Christi Adversus Faustum Socinum". They were familiar also with the writings of Richard Baxter (1615-1691), who had been influenced in his theological thought by Grotius, and probably also, to a certain extent at least, by Amyraut. Daniel Whitby (1638-1726), and Samuel Clarke (1675-1728), the English Arminians, had also been influenced by Grotius; and the earlier New England divines knew their writings. While the New Englanders rejected many of the fundamental positions of these two Arminians, it is not at all impossible that these British writers introduced the governmental theory into New England.

These are the stages by which the governmental theory and the theory of "hypothetical universalism" reached James Morison. From Holland and France to England, then to America, back to England, and finally to Scotland, these views were carried before they became the fundamental doctrines of the Morisonian theology. We are now to turn our attention to an examination of the evidence which proves that this is really the course which these views took before they became a part of Morison's system of theology. As we have said, we shall begin with the men whose names have been historically

associated with the doctrines, Grotius and Amyraut.

A. Grotius, a learned jurist and theologian of Holland, published in 1617 "A Defence of the Catholic Faith concerning the Satisfaction of Christ against Faustus Socinus". From the title of this work, it is clear what the intention of the author was. The Socinians had protested against the conception of abstract justice, demanding punishment for sin in its own right, which was an underlying factor of the Reformation theology.¹⁸ In spite of the purpose which is announced in the title, however, Grotius does not defend the old Satisfaction doctrine of the atonement in his work. In reality, a new theory of the atonement which has received the name, "the governmental theory", is set forth. It has been called the governmental theory, because it explains the atonement as a governmental necessity, and transfers the central point of the theory by teaching that God is, in this matter, not the "offended party" but the supreme "Ruler".¹⁹ Professor Dickie says that we cannot understand this theory of the atonement unless we bear in mind "that in it we have a seventeenth century Jurist applying to theology the principles of law and order which he regarded as self-evident truth in the sphere of Jurisprudence".²⁰

The main points of the theory of Grotius are contained in the following propositions:

1. In the forgiveness of sin, God is to be regarded neither

18. L. W. Grensted - "A Short History of the Doctrine of the Atonement," pp.290,291.

19. F. Foster - "A History of the New England Theology," p.114.

20. J. Dickie - "The Organism of Christian Truth," p.252.

as a judge,²¹ nor as an offended party,²² nor as a creditor,²³ nor as a master,²⁴ but as a moral governor or ruler who is concerned with the highest ends of his government.²⁵

2. The end of punishment is the prevention of crime, or the preservation of order and the promotion of the best interests of the community.²⁶

3. Benevolence or love of the human race is the pre-eminent attribute of God.²⁷

4. As a good governor, however, God cannot allow sin to be committed with impunity. As far as His own nature is concerned, God may pardon sin; but as the moral governor of the universe, He cannot pardon sin without some adequate exhibition of his regard for the law and of his displeasure with sin and of his determination to punish it.²⁸

5. God could have justly punished the sins of all men with deserved and legitimate punishment, that is, eternal death; but because of His love for men,²⁹ He determined "that Christ, being willing of his own love toward men, should ... pay the penalty for our sins, in order that, without prejudice to the divine justice, we might be liberated, upon the intervention of a true faith, from the punishment of eternal death".³⁰

21. H. Grotius - "A Defence of the Catholic Faith Concerning the Satisfaction of Christ," etc., p.53.

22. Ibid., p.55.

23. Ibid., p.62.

24. Ibid., p.64.

25. Ibid., p.51.

26. Ibid., p.64.

27. Ibid., pp.105 and 107.

28. Ibid., pp.105-107.

29. Ibid., p.107.

30. Ibid., pp.1,2.

6. The essence of the atonement, therefore, consists in Christ's giving an exhibition of God's displeasure against sin.³¹ This whole method of forgiving sins on account of the death of Christ is a "relaxation" of the law.³² As a ruler, God is able to make this relaxation.³³ The satisfaction which Christ makes is not the exact payment of a debt,³⁴ nor is it an equivalent of the punishment which sinners would have endured. Christ "pays the penalty for our sins", not in the sense that He satisfies the demands of distributive justice, but in the sense that His afflictions serve as an example and a warning to sinners.³⁵ Christ was not really punished at all, but suffered a substitute for the penalty. Thus, in the case of believers, there is no execution of the law at all.³⁶

B. Moyse Amyraut

The theory regarding the extent of the atonement which has been associated with the name of Amyraut owes its origin to John Cameron, a learned but restless Scot, who became Professor of Theology at Saumur. The theory was adopted by a distinguished class of his pupils, Amyraut, Testard, Cappel, and La Place. It was Amyraut who later digested it into a system in his "Brief Traité de la Predestination", and various other publications.

31. H. Grotius - Op. cit., pp.33,105,106.

32. Ibid., p.73.

33. Ibid., pp.75,76,113.

34. Ibid., p.126.

35. Ibid., pp.105-107,109,113.

36. Ibid., p.73.

The Amyraldian theory is a revolt against the positions maintained at the Synod of Dort. It is presented under the guise of an explanation of the decrees of that Synod, for the divines who advocated it would not admit that they were out of harmony with the decisions which were reached at Dort. We shall set forth the theory largely in the words of Amyraut, as they appear in the treatise which we have mentioned.

1. God wills the salvation of all men on the condition of faith; and Christ's death was for all men on the same condition.

"Le sacrifice, qu'il a offert pour la propitiation de leurs offenses, a esté pour tous; & le salut qu'il a receu de son Pere pour le communiquer aux hommes en la sanctification de l'Esprit, & en la glorification du corps, est destiné à tous, pourueu, di-je, que la disposition necessaire pour le recevoir soit en tous de mesmes." 37

"Il ne faut pas penser pourtant qu'il y ait ny aucun peuple, ny mesmes aucun homme exclus par la volonté de Dieu, du salut qu'il a acquis au genre humain, pourueu qu'il face son profit des tesmoignages de misericorde que Dieu luy donne." 38

2. Amyraut again and again declares that faith is necessary if one is to become a partaker in the benefits which Christ has purchased.

"Mais tout cela dépend de cette condition, qu'ils ne s'en monstrent pas indignes. Car il ne conuenoit pas à la sagesse de Dieu de procurer ny proposer ce salut aux humains, pour en estre mis reellement & de fait en iouyssance, encore qu'ils n'en voulussent point, & qu'ils demeurassent opiniastrez à refuser sa misericorde." 39

3. The condition of fallen man is such, however, that he cannot even accept the salvation which is offered. The faith by

37. Amyraut - "Brief Traité de la Predestination," p.66.

38. Ibid., p.68.

39. Ibid., pp.72,73.

which men believe, therefore, is the result of the operation of God.

"L'Ecriture attribué sans aucune variation la foy par laquelle nous embrassons Christ à l'operation de Dieu en nous, voire en termes qui descouurent assez l'impuissance qui est de nostre part en cette affaire."⁴⁰

4. God, foreseeing that no one would believe of himself, made a second decree by which he chose some to be the recipients of the gift of faith.

"Ne pouuant donc conuenir à sa sapience d'enuoyer son Fils au monde y soustenir une mort ignominieuse, pour ne produire aucun effect au salut des humains, & à sa clemence & charité inenarrable de laisser perir toute la race humaine en cette condamnation, il ne restoit plus qu'un moyen d'y paruenir, c'est de desployer une telle efficace de sa puissance en l'homme, qu'elle surmontast tout ce qu'il y a de corruption en son entendement & en sa volonté, pour le faire croire & embrasser la grace qui luy est offerte. Afin que nonobstant toute la resistance qu'y apportent les tenebres de l'intellect & la peruersité de la volonté, il cedast néanmoins à l'euidence de la verité & reconnust la nécessité & l'excellence du Redempteur, & cherchast en luy sa deliurance. C'est donc en ce conseil que consiste ce que l'on appelle Election ou Predestination, où il monstre comme à l'enuy & les abondamment excellentes richesses de sa misericorde enuers ceux qu'il a élus & predestinez pour leur donner la foy, & sa seuerité enuers ceux qu'il a abandonnez, à eux mesmes, & sa souueraine liberté en la dispensation de cet adorable mystere."⁴¹

It is interesting to note before we turn from this summary of the Amyraldian theory, that Foster, in his historical introduction to Grotius's "Defence", points out that, though the Grotian theory is the natural ally of the theory of "hypothetical universalism", it does not seem that the Grotian view was received with any favour at Saumur. Amyraut and his associates apparently did not see the

40. Amyraut - Op. cit., p.81.

41. Ibid., pp.87,88.

inconsistency between their theory and the view which starts out by making God the offended party, and insists upon the satisfaction of distributive justice.⁴² It is not until a later time that the two views, Grotianism and Amyraldianism, are found united in one system.

C. Richard Baxter.

Having discovered the ultimate roots of Morison's views on the nature and extent of the atonement in Holland and France, we turn to England to discover the first stage in the transmission of these theories to James Morison. Here we shall consider the views of three theologians: one a modified Calvinist, Richard Baxter, and the other two Arminians, Daniel Whitby and Samuel Clarke. As we have noticed in our summary, Baxter lived throughout almost the entire seventeenth century, and the other men lived during part of the seventeenth and the first quarter of the eighteenth century.

It is not at all difficult to show Baxter's dependence on Grotius, but it is much more of a problem to discover to what extent he was influenced by the writings of Amyraut. As for his dependence on Grotius, Foster, in his work, "A History of the New England Theology", declares that Baxter adopted the Grotian theory;⁴³ and, in his historical introduction to the English translation of Grotius's "Defence", Foster affirms that Baxter generally explains the atonement from the Grotian point of view.⁴⁴ J. K. Mozley, in

42. H. Grotius - "Defence," pp.xxviii and xxix (Foster's "Historical Introduction").

43. Page 114.

44. Page xlv.

inconsistency between their theory and the view which starts out by making God the offended party, and insists upon the satisfaction of distributive justice.⁴² It is not until a later time that the two views, Grotianism and Amyraldianism, are found united in one system.

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42. H. Grotius - "Defence," pp.xxviii and xxix (Foster's "Historical Introduction").

43. Page 114.

44. Page xlv.

"The Doctrine of the Atonement", bears a similar testimony.⁴⁵ It is possible also to find a number of direct references to Grotius in the writings of Baxter, and these references make it clear that Baxter was influenced by the theory which Grotius had made. In his work, "The Grotian Religion Discovered", Baxter writes, "I must in Gratitude Profess that I have learned more from Grotius, then from almost any other Writer in those subjects, that ever I read: ... Especially his Books de satisfactione Christi, de veritate Religionis Christianae, de Imperio summar, Potestat, circa sacra, de Jure Belli et Pacis and his Annotations on the four Evangelists."⁴⁶ In the "Catholick Theologie", Baxter says that he owes much thanks to God for what he had learned nearly thirty years before from Grotius's de satisfactione.⁴⁷

In addition to these testimonies of investigators and of Baxter himself, we are able to show the dependence of Baxter on Hugo Grotius by reference to the works of the former. In many respects the writings of Baxter, which are in the main mediating and conciliatory, are very vague, but we believe that a candid examination of them will show beyond a doubt that he was Grotian in his view of the nature of the atonement. Although Baxter did not entirely accept the view that the relation sustained by God in the matter of forgiveness was that of a ruler alone, he says expressly, "Government and punishing Justice, formally as such, belong to God only as Rector. And satisfaction is made him eminently in that

45. Page 157.

46. Pages 4,5.

47. Book One, Part Two, p.69.

Relation."⁴⁸ There can be no doubt that the emphasis in Baxter's writings on the atonement is on God as the ruler or legislator. By the atonement, Christ did not satisfy God as an absolute lord or creditor, but as "rector per legem".⁴⁹ In the "Universal Redemption of Mankind", Baxter writes, "Christ hath made satisfaction to God as Legislator; and accordingly his Legal Rigorous Justice is satisfied, for the Sins of all mankind, as they are condemned, and were to be judged directly, primarily, simply by that Law; and hath not satisfied the Legislators Justice for some men only as Elect, or for some more than another, but equally for all."⁵⁰ Christ's sufferings proved to be a satisfaction because "they were a most apt means for the demonstration of the Governing Justice, Holiness, Wisdom and Mercy of God, by which God could attain the ends of the Law and Government, better than by executing the Law on the world in its destruction."⁵¹ The immediate effects of Christ's death are the demonstration of God's justice and hatred of sin, the giving of an example for the deterring of offenders, the preserving of the Lawgiver and the law from contempt, and a demonstration of unspeakable love to men.⁵² Christ, by His work, did not satisfy the law, but the Lawgiver. The law does not know any proper satisfaction, for it is beyond the power of the law to admit of satisfaction instead of fulfilling and execution. To admit of such a satisfaction is the act of the Legislator, as he is

48. "Catholick Theologie," Book One, Part Two, p.69.

49. Baxter - "Universal Redemption of Mankind," p.25.

50. Pages 36,37.

51. Baxter - "Catholick Theologie," Book One, Part Two, pp.40,41.

52. Baxter - "Universal Redemption of Mankind," p.10.

above the law.⁵³ There was thus a relaxation of the law, for Christ's "sufferings were not a fulfilling of the Laws Threatning ...; but a satisfaction for our not fulfilling the Precept, and to prevent Gods fulfilling the Threatning on us".⁵⁴ On the same page of the "Universal Redemption of Mankind", Baxter writes, "There were no place for Pardon, if the proper Debt be Paid, and the Law not Relaxed but Fulfilled." In the "Catholick Theologie", Baxter declares that the sufferings of Christ could not be the same which was due by the law; but his sufferings were of such a nature that they merely satisfied the Lawgiver, who is above the law and can dispense with it.⁵⁵ Being satisfied, the Lawgiver is no longer obliged to destroy the sinner; and the sinner, who before was not pardonable, can now be pardoned.⁵⁶ A new law of grace of universal extent has been enacted by God the Father and Christ the Mediator. By this law, Christ himself and all his benefits are bestowed upon all alike, provided they believe and accept the offer.⁵⁷ These statements from the writings of Baxter conclusively prove the dependence of Baxter upon Grotius.

It is difficult to determine to what extent Baxter was influenced by the theory of Amyraut. The writings of Baxter are so vague, and many of the statements which are contained in them are apparently so irreconcilable, that it is difficult to determine exactly what the Baxterian position is. It is certain that Baxter

53. Baxter - "Universal Redemption of Mankind," p.48.

54. Ibid., p.49.

55. Book One, Part Two, p.40.

56. Baxter - "Universal Redemption of Mankind," p.13.

57. Ibid., p.39.

knew Amyraut, for he speaks of him in his treatise entitled, "Disputation of Special Redemption".⁵⁸ Again, in his address to the people of Kidderminster in the unmutilated editions of his "Saint's Everlasting Rest", Baxter mentions both Cameron and Amyraut. He writes:-

"Beware of extreams in the controverted points of Religion. ... The middle way which Camero, Ludov, Crocius, Marinus, Amiraldu, Davenant, with all the divines of Brittain and Brem in the Synod of Dort, go I think is neerest the Truth of any that I know who have wrote on these points of Redemption and universal Grace."⁵⁹

In his "Outline of Theology", A. A. Hodge equates the Amyraldian and the Baxterian views of the extent of the atonement,⁶⁰ and in an anonymous pamphlet, published no doubt during "the Atonement Controversy" in which Morison had a part, it is declared that Richard Baxter imported from the French divines the scheme of which Cameron was the author.⁶¹ George Smeaton, on the other hand, insists that the celebrated Baxter has often been unfairly claimed as an Amyraldian. It is the opinion of Smeaton, that, although the atonement in the teaching of Baxter had a general reference, it nevertheless merited its own application, and thus is the same as the theory which was held by Davenant.⁶²

There are some passages in the writings of Baxter which we believe must lead to the conclusion that the judgment of Smeaton is correct. In the second book of the "Catholick Theologie", Baxter

58. Baxter - Op. cit., p.484.

59. Preface to the third edition. (Pages not numbered)

60. Page 418.

61. "A Dialogue on the Extent of the Atonement, between Clericus and Honestus," p.2.

62. "The Doctrine of the Atonement, as Taught by the Apostles," pp.542,543.

declares:-

"He whose Sufferings were primarily satisfaction for Sin, were secondarily meritorious of the means to bring men to the intended end; that is, of the Word and Spirit, by which Christ causeth Sinners to believe: so that Faith is a fruit of the Death of Christ in a remoter secondary sense."⁶³

In "An End of Doctrinal Controversies", he expresses himself in these words:-

"Christ died for all, but not for all alike or equally; that is, He intended good to all, but not an equal good with an equal intention."⁶⁴

There are, however, other passages in the works of Baxter which certainly seem to show traces of the influence of Amyraut, and which might well lead some to suspect Baxter of holding the theory of hypothetical redemption. In the paragraph which follows that which we have quoted from "An End of Doctrinal Controversies", Baxter writes as follows:-

"Common Redemption and the Decree of Common Grace, both antecede that which is properly called Election, in order of Nature in esse objetivo; that is, God decreeth to give Faith and Salvation effectively to some of them that had common Grace."⁶⁵

Another example of language which might possibly show the influence of Amyraut is to be found in the book entitled, "Universal Redemption of Mankind". Baxter writes:-

"Faith is a fruit of the Death of Christ, (and so is all the good we do enjoy): But not directly as it is satisfaction to justice; but only Remotely, as it proceedeth from that jus Dominii which Christ hath received, to send the Spirit in what measure and to whom he will, and to succeed it accordingly; and as it is necessary to the attainment of the further ends

63. Page 69.
64. Page 160.
65. Page 161.

of his Death, in the certain gathering and saving of the Elect. So that most directly it floweth from the good pleasure of God and the Redeemer, which we call Praedestination. So that it is an unmeet Speech (and such as Scripture never useth) to say, that "Christ dyed to purchase us Faith", though it be a Fruit of his Purchase. As if a Prince should Ransome or Buy a condemned Malefactor, agreeing and resolving that yet he shall not be saved, if he will spit in his Redeemers Face and refuse him and his kindness. And if it be known that this Malefactor is so desperately wicked, that he will thus reject and abuse his Redeemer and refuse his kindness, except the Prince send a bosom Friend to perswade him, who is the most powerful unresistable Orator in the World: If the Prince because he is resolved neither to lose the Man, nor his Price of Ransom, doth send this Orator with a Charge that he shall take no denial, nor cease till he have procured the Malefactors consent; is it a convenient Speech to say, that he gave his Ransom Mony to purchase the Malefactors consent to be delivered? Or to cure his wicked nature? No: Yet it is true that his Price was a ground-work and Preparative to this effect; so it is in our present Case."⁶⁶

D. Daniel Whitby and Samuel Clarke.

The Grotian theory, at the time of its promulgation, was vigorously opposed by the Orthodox on the Continent; and, though it could have been expected that it would find a warm reception among the Arminians of Holland, such was not the case. The theory found a different atmosphere and a kind reception, however, among the Arminians of England. The original editions of Grotius's work on the atonement were read in England; and in 1636 it was reprinted at Oxford. The first translation into English was made in 1692.⁶⁷ We shall concern ourselves here only with the adoption of the Grotian theory by Whitby and Clarke.

66. Pages 42,43.

67. Foster - "Historical Introduction," to his translation of Grotius's "Defence", pp.xxx-xxxvi. (Summary)

Whitby's sermon, "The Satisfaction of Christ", is a striking presentation of the Grotian theory. His terms are drawn largely from the work of Grotius. In speaking of the wisdom of God in making the atonement, he says:-

"Should God have issued out a general indemnity and given us a full remission of our sin without anything required by way of reparation for the violation of his law, he must have pardoned sinners without any demonstration of his holiness and justice, or of his hatred of sin and resolution not to let it go unpunished, and so without sufficient motive to deter us from it for the future; which seems not well consistent with his holiness and justice or that relation to us of our governor and great lawgiver which seemeth plainly to require the vindication of his honor, and the preservation of the laws he hath established, from contempt."⁶⁸

Later, in the same sermon, he declares:-

"By the obedience of our Lord Jesus Christ to the death in our stead, all the great ends of punishment designed by wise governors were signally obtained."⁶⁹

He gives the following as these great ends:

"Firstly, *παράδειγμα*, that they who suffer may be examples to others, etc. Secondly, *νοουθεσία*, instruction, that the offender may learn wisdom. Thirdly, *τιμωρία*, the vindication of the prince's honor and the preservation of the laws he hath established, from contempt."⁷⁰

The Grotian views of Samuel Clarke are set forth in a sermon entitled, "Of the Nature of the Sufferings of Christ". Clarke summarizes his theory in the following terms:-

"1. That it was from the beginning infinitely reasonable, that all possible Honour and Obedience should at all times be paid by all Creatures to all the Laws and Commands of God.
2. That this Honour due to the Laws of God is diminished, as much as in Us lies, by the Sins and Impieties of men.

68. Quoted by Foster in his "Historical Introduction" to Grotius's "Defence", p.xxxv.

69. Ibid., p.xxxv.

70. Ibid., p.xxxv.

3. That in the nature of Government it is highly reasonable and necessary, after such presumptuous transgression, that God should make some vindication of his divine Authority. 4. That the first and most obvious method of doing This, is by the punishment or destruction of the Offenders. 5. But because God hates not the persons of Sinners, and hath no pleasure in their destruction, but only a just zeal for the Honour of his divine and righteous Laws; therefore, whenever That is by any means vindicated, his Wrath is appeased. Lastly, our Saviour by obeying, and that on our behalf and in our stead, death, has in the most glorious manner vindicated the Honour and Authority of God; and, by establishing a Covenant of grace and mercy upon the merits of his Sufferings and Obedience, has secured, to All that truly repent, and amend, pardon and remission of Sin, consistent with the honour of the divine Laws."⁷¹

Foster points out that in one respect Clarke improves upon the mode of expressing the governmental theory as it was set forth by Grotius. Clarke avoids the designation of the sufferings of Christ as a punishment, and more accurately speaks of what Christ endured as "vicarious punishment in the stead of the punishment". Many times throughout the writings of Clarke Christ is said to have suffered, but Foster has discovered no place in them where He is declared to have been punished.⁷²

E. The New England School

The governmental theory, as set forth by Grotius, was not complete, and it remained in this incomplete form for about one hundred and fifty years. It was not until the rise of the New England School that the view was developed and made into a system. It is not surprising to learn, therefore, that the governmental theory has been called by such names as the Edwardean theory, the

71. "Works", Vol.VI, p.140, London edition of 1756.

72. Foster - Op. cit., pp.xxxviii,xxxix.

New England theory, the New School theory, and the Hopkinsian theory.

The treatise on the atonement by Grotius was early known in New England. William Pynchon apparently referred to it, and Charles Chauncey had evidently read it in 1659.⁷³ In the year 1653, John Norton quoted it with approval; and as early as 1723, there was a copy of the work of Grotius in the library of Harvard College.⁷⁴

There were also other ways by which the theory of Grotius could have reached the New England theologians. The New England divines were well acquainted with the works of Richard Baxter; and these were highly prized among them. We have seen to what a great extent Baxter adopted the Grotian theory, and there can be no doubt that his commendation carried a great amount of weight with the New England theologians. The fact, furthermore, that it is possible for men to learn from those whom they oppose provides us with additional sources of the knowledge of the view of Grotius in New England. Circumstances had made the New Englanders acquainted with the writings of the English Arminians. It was Whitby's book, "Discourses on the Five Points", which called forth Edward's "Treatise on the Will". Dr Samuel Hopkins, in whose writings the governmental theory first made its appearance in New England, had read both Whitby and Clarke. Jonathan Edwards, Jr., knew the works of Dr Clarke very well; and when Edwards was settled in New

73. Foster - "A History of the New England Theology," p.114.

74. Foster - "Historical Introduction" to his translation of Grotius's "Defence", p.xliv.

Haven, he had access to the original text of Grotius's "Defence", which was in the library of Yale College. That he had read Grotius is proved by the fact that he introduced the illustration of Zaleucus into his third sermon on the atonement. Foster believes that "it is by no means incredible that to Samuel Clarke or Whitby may be due the credit for introducing that suggestion which, under the Edwardean theory of virtue, has led to the prevalence of the governmental theory of the atonement in the Congregational and a large portion of the Presbyterian denomination in America".⁷⁵

The men who made up the New England School were not in entire agreement among themselves, but they agreed in the main principles of a theory. These have been summarized by one of their own number, Edward A. Park, and we cannot do better than quote his words. He has given the New England view in the following propositions:-

"First, our Lord suffered pains which were substituted for the penalty of the law, and may be called punishment in the more general sense of that word, but were not, strictly and literally, the penalty which the law had threatened.

"Secondly, the sufferings of our Lord satisfied the general justice of God, but did not satisfy his distributive justice.

"Thirdly, the humiliation, pains, and death of our Redeemer were equivalent in meaning to the punishment threatened in the moral law, and thus they satisfied Him who is determined to maintain the honor of this law, but they did not satisfy the demands of the law itself for our punishment.

"Fourthly, the active obedience, viewed as the holiness, of Christ, was honorable to the law, but was not a work of supererogation, performed by our Substitute, and then transferred and imputed to us, so as to satisfy the requisitions of the law for our own active obedience.

"The last three statements are sometimes comprehended in the more general proposition, that the atonement was equal, in the meaning and spirit of it, to the payment of our debts,

75. Foster - Op. cit. pp.xliv-xlvi (Summary).

but it was not literally the payment of either our debt of obedience or our debt of punishment, or any other debt which we owed to law or distributive justice. Therefore,

"Fifthly, the law and the distributive justice of God, although honored by the life and death of Christ, will yet eternally demand the punishment of every one who has sinned.

"Sixthly, the atonement rendered it consistent and desirable for God to save all who exercise evangelical faith, yet it did not render it obligatory on Him, in distributive justice to save them.

"Seventhly, the atonement was designed for the welfare of all men; to make the eternal salvation of all men possible; to remove all the obstacles which the honor of the law and of distributive justice presented against the salvation of the non-elect as well as the elect.

"Eighthly, the atonement does not constitute the reason why some men are regenerated, and others not, but this reason is found only in the sovereign, electing will of God. 'Even so Father! for so it seemed good in thy sight.'

"Ninthly, the atonement is useful on men's account, and in order to furnish new motives to holiness, but it is necessary on God's account, and in order to enable him, as a consistent Ruler, to pardon any, even the smallest sin, and therefore to bestow on sinners any, even the smallest favor."⁷⁶

It should be noticed that in this summary two different kinds of justice are mentioned. This introduces us to one of the contributions which the New England theologians made to the development of the governmental theory, for, following Dr Edwards, they made a careful analysis of the idea of justice. They distinguished three types: commutative justice, which respects property and matters of commerce solely; distributive justice, which consists in properly rewarding virtue or good conduct, and punishing crimes or vicious conduct; and general or rectoral justice, which determines the action of the ruler of the state.⁷⁷ Grensted points

76. "Introductory Essay" in "The Atonement - Discourses and Treatises by Edwards, Smalley, Maxcy, Emmons, Griffin, Burge, and Weeks," pp.x,xi.

77. E. A. Park - "The Atonement," etc., pp.20,21.

out that Grotius himself was aware of these distinctions, but he was not consistent in his application of them.⁷⁸ In this respect, the so-called Edwardean writers are much more logical. They emphasize the fact that it is neither commutative nor distributive justice, but only rectoral justice which is satisfied by the Cross of Christ.

When we turn to a consideration of the view of the New Englanders on the extent of the atonement, we discover that their view is exactly like that of Amyraut. Park's summary, which we have given above, makes it clear that the reason why only some men are regenerated is to be found in the sovereign, electing will of God alone, and not in the atonement which was designed to make the salvation of all possible. Griffin, in "An Humble Attempt to Reconcile the Differences of Christians respecting the Extent of the Atonement", gives the following as the order of the divine decrees:

"The sovereign efficient cause resolved to permit the fall of man: the Moral Governor next decreed a provision for the whole human race: the sovereign efficient cause then decided how many on the one hand he would incline to believe, and on the other, not how many he would make sinners, but how many creatures who had forfeited every divine influence he would let alone."⁷⁹

Weeks, in "A Dialogue on the Atonement", states this view of the atonement even more clearly. He gives it in these words:

"All men sinned - Christ laid down his life for all - the offer of mercy is authorized to be made to all - all, with one consent, refuse the offer. Here, then, comes in the purpose of election - God determined that he would make some willing to accept the offer. And in pursuance of this determination, he sends his Spirit to make them willing in the day of his power."⁸⁰

78. L. W. Grensted - "A Short History of the Doctrine of the Atonement," p.303.

79. E. A. Park - Op. cit., p.334.

80. Ibid., p.578.

This is undoubtedly the same view as that which was developed by Amyraut in his "Brief Traité de la Predestination"; but how did the New Englanders get it? We have been unable to find any references either in their own writings or in historical works to the source of their view. The New England theologians were much given to speculating on such matters, and it is possible that they were original in their development of the theory. It may be, however, that they had the writings of Amyraut or Cameron, but we have been unable to find any evidence of this. Now, we have seen that there have been some authors who have considered Baxter as an Amyraldian, and that there are passages in Baxter's works which seem to show traces of Amyraut's influence. This inclines us to believe that there is a strong presumption in favour of the view that it was Baxter who suggested the theory of hypothetical redemption to the New England divines.

F. The English Baptists and Congregationalists
of the Late Eighteenth and Early
Nineteenth Centuries

The New England School had a wide influence upon the churches of America, but its influence was not limited to that country. It is possible to produce an abundance of evidence to show that the influence of the Edwardians extended to the Baptists and Congregationalists of England during the latter part of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth. The governmental theory of the atonement, and the modifications of the Calvinistic theology, in the transmission of which to America English divines played a

part, were returned in a much more highly developed form. We have already mentioned the names of some of the English divines who adopted the modified form of Calvinism which came from America, and now we shall present some of the evidence which proves that these men were really dependent on the New Englanders.

There are many testimonies to this fact to be found in the writings of historians. Cave declares that through the influence of such men as the younger Edwards, Hopkins, Dwight, and Emmons, modified Calvinism became avowed in Great Britain by men like Andrew Fuller, Principal Hill, Robert Hall, Carey, Jay, George Payne, Ralph Wardlaw, Pye Smith, Gilbert, and Lindsay Alexander.⁸¹ Principal Macleod says in his article, "The Reformed Faith in Modern Scotland", that "the modified Calvinism of the later Edward-eans affected the English Congregationalist and Baptist Churches";⁸² and a similar testimony is given by Foster in the historical introduction to his translation of Grotius's "Defence".⁸³

Among the earliest of these Englishmen who were influenced by the New England School was the Baptist divine, Andrew Fuller, who died in 1815. Fisher mentions Fuller and Thomas Chalmers as having been influenced by that School.⁸⁴ Cave, as we have seen, mentions him first in a long list of men who were more or less dependent on the new theology; and Foster mentions him alone as representative of the British divines who accepted many of the New England views on the atonement and other subjects.⁸⁵ The letters of

81. "Scriptural Doctrine of Sacrifice," p.367.

82. "Princeton Theological Review," Vol.XXIV, April, 1926, p.181.

83. Page lvi.

84. "History of Christian Doctrine," p.418.

85. Foster - "Historical Introduction" to his translation of Grotius's "Defence", pp.lvi,lvii.

Fuller show us how well acquainted he was with the New Englanders and their writings. He writes that it was some time after his ordination in 1775 that "Edwards on the Will" was recommended to him,⁸⁶ but he says that he did not read the work until 1777.⁸⁷ From another letter, we learn that in 1776 he became acquainted with two gentlemen who had been influenced by Edwards and Bellamy.⁸⁸ In a letter of 1782, he refers to Joseph Bellamy's "True Religion Delineated".⁸⁹ Perhaps we should note at this point, that Fuller wrote a recommendatory preface to the British edition of this work which was published in 1809. In this preface, Fuller declares that while he does not advocate every sentiment in the book, he sincerely hopes that it will meet with a candid and careful attention from the religious public, for he is sure that if the doctrines which it contains prevailed, there would spring up more true religion than he had ever seen.⁹⁰ After 1780 we find many references to Fuller's having read the works of Jonathan Edwards, Sr.⁹¹ He writes also of having read "Dr Edwards on Free Grace and the Atonement";⁹² and, in another letter, he tells of the delight which he experienced at receiving a copy of "West on the Atonement".⁹³ In a letter to Timothy Dwight, Fuller acknowledges his indebtedness to the writings of President Edwards, Dr Edwards, and of Dwight himself.⁹⁴

86. Ryland - "The Life and Death of ... Andrew Fuller," p.44.

87. Ibid., p.58.

88. Ibid., p.56.

89. Ibid., p.88. (See note)

90. Page vii.

91. Ryland - Op. cit., pp.141,152,154,189, etc.

92. Ibid., pp.365,366.

93. Ibid., p.366.

94. A. Fuller - "Works," Vol.I - "Memoir," pp.cxxiv, cxxv.

To this evidence of Fuller's knowledge of the New England divines, we shall add one or two excerpts from his writings to show that he largely adopted the position of the New England School on the atonement. In a short article entitled, "On the Satisfaction of Christ", he states that the atonement, and consequently the pardon of sin, have no respect to commutative justice, and further that the sufferings of Christ did not satisfy God's distributive justice. He adds:-

"Christ's sufferings satisfied public justice; and therefore, with respect to public justice, salvation is an act of perfect justice."⁹⁵

"The atonement made by Christ represented the nature of sin, and the displeasure of God against it in such a light that no injury could accrue to the moral system; no imputation would lie against the righteousness of the great Legislator, though he should forgive the sinner, and instate him in eternal felicity.... The death of Christ, therefore, is to be considered as a great, important, and public transaction respecting God and the whole system of rational beings. Public justice requires that neither any of these be injured, nor the character and government of the great Legislator disrespected, by the pardon of any."⁹⁶

We have dealt at some length with the relation of Andrew Fuller to the New England divines. It was fitting that we should do this because of his early associations with these men, and because of his importance for the introduction of the new views into Scotland. Space will not permit us to do more than make a few remarks about several others of the English theologians who adopted the New England views.

Robert Hall was also one of the older of the English divines

95. "Works", Vol.V, p.754.

96. Ibid., p.754.

who adopted the theories of the New England School. Like Fuller, he was a Baptist. His biographer, J. W. Morris, states that, during the opening years of the nineteenth century, Hall entertained a considerable dislike for the generality of the American divines who professed to be followers of President Edwards, but more recently of Bellamy and Hopkins. With the exception of Edwards, Hall considered them to be as far as possible from original thinkers. The biographer adds, however, that he does not believe Hall would have formed exactly the same opinion at a later period in his life.⁹⁷ The report which Dr Robert Balmer, of the United Secession Church, gives of one of his conversations with Dr Hall reveals clearly that later in life Hall did not hold such an opinion of the New England theologians.⁹⁸ Early in the conversation, he referred Balmer to Bellamy's "True Religion Delineated" as containing, in his estimation, the Scriptural doctrine on the subject of the extent of the atonement.⁹⁹

The influence which Hall had on Balmer, and through him, in our opinion, on Morison, was concerned with the extent of the atonement; so we shall give Hall's views on this as they are reported by Balmer in the account which he has left of his conversations with Hall. When Balmer informed Hall of the perplexity which he often experienced regarding the extent of the atonement, Hall declared that he believed in "general redemption", and that he considered it the only basis for the universal offer of the gospel. When Balmer

97. J. W. Morris - "Biographical Recollections of the Rev. Robert Hall, A.M.," pp.152,153.

98. R. Balmer - "Academical Lectures," Vol.I - "Appendix to Memoir," p.87.

99. Ibid., pp.80,81.

asked him if he did not consider "election" and "particular redemption" to be inseparably connected, Hall replied:-

"I believe firmly in election; but I do not think it involves 'particular redemption'. I consider the sacrifice of Christ as a remedy, not only adapted, but intended for all, and as placing all in a salvable state; as removing all barriers to their salvation, except such as arise from their own perversity and depravity. But God foresaw, or knew, that none would accept the remedy merely of themselves; and therefore, by what may be regarded as a separate and subsequent arrangement, he resolved to glorify his mercy, by effectually applying salvation to a certain number of our race, through the agency of his Holy Spirit."¹⁰⁰

We shall consider next Joseph Gilbert, a Congregational minister, who lived from 1779 to 1852. Gilbert was a pupil of Dr Edward Williams, who published the complete works of President Jonathan Edwards in Britain,¹⁰¹ and who, under the influence of the New England School, adopted a modified form of Calvinism. In his book, "The Christian Atonement", Gilbert shows an acquaintance with the works of Bellamy and Edwards.¹⁰² His consideration of the various kinds of justice makes it certain that he was either directly or indirectly influenced by the New England theology. He maintains that the doctrine of the retributive justice of God as held by the older Calvinists cannot be rationally entertained.¹⁰³ Justice, in his opinion, is a modification of benevolence.¹⁰⁴ He writes, moreover, that "only in the relation which he bears to the intelligent creation, as the supreme moral governor, as presiding

100. R. Balmer - Op. cit., p.80.

101. J. Gilbert - "Memoir ... of the Rev. Edward Williams, D.D.," pp.419,420.

102. See notes on pp.146,147.

103. Ibid., p.186.

104. Ibid., pp.185 and 189.

over general law, is it that the Divine Father either requires, or can accept of substituted suffering".¹⁰⁵ The Grotian views of Gilbert are also set forth in the following quotations:

"The great work of Christ in effecting our deliverance was, as comprehensively predicted, to magnify the law, and to make it honourable."¹⁰⁶

"Instead, therefore, of the atonement having its effect upon the Father to change his purpose, it was a public declaration of what he is, the medium through which he reveals himself, the exhibition of his righteousness, in the very act of exercising forbearance and forgiving sin."¹⁰⁷

Lastly, let us notice a small part of the evidence which proves that George Payne, another Congregational divine, came under the influence of the teaching of the New Englanders. This theologian states in the preface of his work, "Lectures on Divine Sovereignty, Election, the Atonement, Justification, and Regeneration", his general agreement with the sentiments of Mr Fuller and Dr Williams.¹⁰⁸ Of the New Englanders, he refers in this book to Edwards, Hopkins, Moses Stuart, and Dwight. When about to discuss the manner of the atonement. he declares that he has followed the phraseology of Dwight in the first part of the subject.¹⁰⁹ Payne gives his Grotian view in the following words:-

"In defining the atonement, it was stated to mean that satisfaction which was rendered to God as the moral Governor of the world, by which every obstacle, on his part, to the pardon of sin, in a way consistent with moral government, was entirely removed. In explaining the nature of satisfaction, it was observed, that to make satisfaction for sin is

105. J. Gilbert - Op. cit., p.121.

106. Ibid., p.223.

107. Ibid., p.224.

108. Page xii.

109. Ibid., p.170.

to do that which restores, and will preserve, to the moral government of God, that power over its subjects, which the entrance of sin had shaken, and which its unconditional forgiveness would have entirely destroyed."¹¹⁰

He gives his views on the universality of the atonement and of the limited nature of its application on pages 203 and 204 of the work mentioned above.

"I believe in the unlimited, universal, infinite sufficiency of the atonement of Christ - I believe that it was the INTENTION of God, as the moral governor, in giving his Son as a sacrifice for sin ... to provide a remedy commensurate with the disease. I believe, on the other hand, in the limited application of the atonement. I believe it was the intention of God, as a Sovereign, to render that remedy effectual, by special and sovereign influence, in the case of certain individuals only who are affected with the general disease, so that the intention of God, as a Sovereign, and as a Ruler, in reference to the atonement, is different, the one being general, the other particular."

G. Ralph Wardlaw, John Brown, and Robert Balmer.

During the first three decades of the nineteenth century, the names and works of the New England divines became more and more familiar to the people of Scotland. We have already noted in the first chapter that the works of Finney and his colleagues at Oberlin had been republished and widely circulated in Britain before James Morison went to the North as a probationer. In a pamphlet written to refute the positions of Morison in "The Question, 'What Must I Do to be Saved?' Answered", John Graham speaks of the growing influence of Hopkinsianism in Scotland, and he expresses the opinion that Morison has been infected with it.¹¹¹ Robert Shaw,

¹¹⁰. George Payne - "Lectures on Divine Sovereignty," etc., p.204.

¹¹¹. "Refutation of a Number of Pernicious Errors," p.6.

who in 1843 wrote "The New Theology Examined in Regard to the Nature and Extent of the Atonement of Christ", refers to the Hopkinsianism which had come to Scotland from America, and to the growth of these new views among the ministers of the United Secession Church.¹¹² In a letter published in "Dalrymple's Secession Magazine and Religious Examiner", for July, 1845, a correspondent says that the "new views" had come from America. He quotes a letter which had been written in the United States in 1823, and which refers to the fact that Dr Dwight's books had before that time been published in Glasgow.¹¹³ The editor of the second edition of Stevenson's "Treatise on the Offices of Christ" remarks that the "new theology" had found its way into Scotland chiefly through the writings of Dwight, and that these new views had been widely received.¹¹⁴

This New England influence entered Scotland through the English Nonconformists of whom we have spoken. For the present, we shall merely quote the testimony of Principal Macleod on the truth of this statement. More evidence of its truth will be given as we proceed. Principal Macleod declares that the Congregational churches of Scotland were affected by the looser Calvinism which had come to prevail in the English Congregational churches.¹¹⁵

112. Pages 8,9.

113. Vol. I, No.II, pp.83,84.

114. Editor's Advertisement, 3rd edition, 1845, p.v.

115. J. Macleod - "The Reformed Faith in Modern Scotland," article in "The Princeton Theological Review," Vol.XXIV, April, 1926, p.182.

Ralph Wardlaw.

Ralph Wardlaw was the Professor of Systematic Theology in the Glasgow Theological Academy of the Scottish Congregational Church. We shall consider his relationship to the "new theology" first, for James Macbeth declares that Wardlaw was one of the chief, though unintentional originators of Morisonianism in Scotland,¹¹⁶ and Andrew Marshall was of the opinion that the writings of Wardlaw probably contributed more than those of any other to advancing the "new views" in the United Secession Church.¹¹⁷

Wardlaw's contacts with Andrew Fuller and other Englishmen during the opening years of the nineteenth century seem to lend some support to these opinions. Alexander, in his "Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Ralph Wardlaw, D.D.", tells us that Wardlaw had the pleasure of making the personal acquaintance of the Rev. Andrew Fuller in 1802. Before this, Wardlaw had long been an admiring reader of the writings of Fuller. To the great delight of Wardlaw, he was invited to accompany Fuller on the remainder of his tour in Scotland, and the two men became close friends.¹¹⁸ In 1805 Ralph Wardlaw again saw Mr Fuller, who in that year paid his last visit to Scotland.¹¹⁹ During the college session of 1804-05, Wardlaw made another contact which brought him into close association with those English divines who had adopted the New England views. At that time, he met George Payne, who had come

116. "Morisonianism Refuted - The Nature of the Atonement," p.2.

117. "The Atonement," p.28.

118. Page 65.

119. Ibid., p.88.

to Glasgow to continue his academic pursuits. There began a friendship between Payne and Wardlaw which lasted for life.¹²⁰

Wardlaw was also brought into close contact with the English Non-conformists during the early years of the last century through his work for the British and Foreign Bible Society.¹²¹

The English theologians brought Wardlaw into an acquaintance-ship with the views and works of the New Englanders. A particularly strong and lasting friendship was built up between Dr Wardlaw and Leonard Woods, of the New England school. In 1829, Dr Wardlaw wrote a long letter to Dr Woods, in which are contained accounts of many family affairs and other intimate details, which indicate that by this time they were very close friends.¹²² After this, other records of the correspondence of the two men are given by Alexander.¹²³

The following excerpts from the works of Dr Wardlaw show to what extent he adopted the New England views on the atonement:

"It is, on all hands admitted, that atonement has reference to God, not personally considered, but rectorally."¹²⁴

"As a righteous Lawgiver and Ruler, Jehovah must be considered as displeased with his guilty creatures, on account of their violation of his authority; - whilst, at the same time, from the infinite benignity of his nature, he is inclined to forgiveness."¹²⁵

According to Wardlaw the great question concerning the atonement is this:-

120. Alexander - "Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Ralph Wardlaw, D.D.," pp.82,83.

121. Ibid., p.86.

122. Ibid., pp.273-276.

123. Ibid., pp.290, 346-348.

124. Wardlaw - "Discourses on the Nature and Extent of the Atonement of Christ," p.35.

125. Wardlaw - "Discourses on the Principal Points of the Socinian Controversy." p.227.

"In what manner may forgiveness be extended to the guilty, so as to satisfy the claims of infinite justice, and thus to maintain in their full dignity, free from every charge of imperfection or mutability, the character of the Governor, the rectitude of his administration, and the sanction of his law?"¹²⁶

In the "Discourses on the Principal Points of the Socinian Controversy", Wardlaw distinguishes three kinds of justice - commutative, distributive, and public. The great purposes of the atonement are said to have immediate reference to public justice, which includes "those great general principles of equity, according to which, in union with benevolence, the Sovereign Ruler governs the intelligent universe".¹²⁷ The two great ends of public justice are, the glory of God, and in connection with it, the general good of his creatures.¹²⁸ It was public justice which Christ satisfied by the atonement.¹²⁹

As for the extent of the atonement, Wardlaw adopts in his writings the Amyraldian and New England solution. The object of the atonement was general; it left God at perfect liberty to pardon whom He would. The special love of God is made manifest by His bestowing this blessing on whom He wishes. "It is, in every instance, his grace that gives the general remedy its particular application, or personal efficiency, - and the previous purpose (which must of course be conceived of as eternal) to give it this application, and efficiency, is election."¹³⁰

126. Wardlaw - Op. cit., p.227.

127. Ibid., pp.231-234 (Summary).

128. Ibid., p.235.

129. Wardlaw - "Discourses on the Nature and Extent of the Atonement of Christ," p.58.

130. Wardlaw - "Two Essays:- I. On the Assurance of Faith: II. On the Extent of the Atonement, and Universal Pardon," pp.291, 292.

John Brown and Robert Balmer.

We have already given the opinion of Andrew Marshall that the New England views entered the United Secession Church through the influence of Ralph Wardlaw, and we have presented evidence to prove that Wardlaw came under the influence of those views long before the opening of the last century. There was an especially close relationship between Wardlaw and John Brown, of the United Secession Church. In his pamphlet, "Opinions on Faith," etc., Brown speaks of "my friend Dr Wardlaw".¹³¹ It is our belief that it was Wardlaw who introduced Brown, and, through him, others in the United Secession Church, to the "new views" which had come from America.

The influence of the conversation of Balmer with Robert Hall on the extent of the atonement, however, should not be forgotten. This conversation undoubtedly played a large part in leading Balmer to adopt the doctrine that the atonement has a general reference as well as a special one. It no doubt brought him into a closer relationship with the British and New England advocates of the governmental theory of the atonement and of a modified form of Calvinism.

In the writings of both Balmer and Brown, many references and quotations from these English and New England divines are to be found. In his "Opinion on Faith," etc., Brown gives an especially long list of names of men whose works he recommends on the several subjects with which he deals. Among others, he recommends Fuller, Williams, Payne, Gilbert, and Smalley. Some of these he mentions as many as three times. In other works, he mentions Pye Smith,

131. See note on page 44.

Fuller, Gilbert, and Jenkyn. In his statement to the Synod in 1843, Balmer refers to Payne, Fuller, and Hall.

A few excerpts from Brown's "Opinions on Faith", etc., will enable us to understand his doctrine of the nature of the atonement.

"When Jesus Christ, the Mediator of men, is said to give himself a ransom, the meaning is, that, by his personal exertions and sufferings, he gives a manifestation of the reasonableness and excellence, both of the preceptive and stationary parts of the divine law which men have violated, and of course, of the holiness and justice of God in establishing this constitution, and the unreasonableness and wickedness of man in violating it, fully equivalent to what would have been given had the law taken its course, and all its transgressors been 'punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord'."132

"The holy law of God, which man had broken, is more illustriously 'magnified and made honourable', by the Eternal Living One who was with the Father, voluntarily assuming human nature, that he might become capable of being subject to it, and most cheerfully yielding perfect obedience to all its requisitions, in circumstances of the greatest conceivable difficulty than it could have been by the perfect obedience of innumerable millions of men and of angels."133

"Not only is the ransom paid by him (Christ), that is, his 'obedience to the death', of sufficient value, that, if God so pleased, it might avail for the pardon and salvation of all the sinning beings in the universe, but it is intended by God - is in its own nature fitted, and has in fact been found effectual, for removing all the obstacles rising out of the divine moral government, to the pardon and salvation of the lost race of men; so that, 'whosoever believeth on him shall assuredly not perish, but have everlasting life'."134

We believe that the view of the nature of the atonement which Balmer sets forth in his lectures is similar to that of Brown. It is our desire here merely to point out the use which Balmer makes

132. Page 36.

133. Pages 36,37.

134. Page 38.

of the word "expedient" with regard to the atonement. He writes:-

"The grand design of the atonement was to satisfy the justice of the Supreme Ruler; but that justice could be satisfied only by a full equivalent, - by an expedient which would prove an adequate safeguard for the interests of morality, - which would serve as effectually as the punishment of transgressors themselves to deter them, and to deter others, from future transgression."¹³⁵

"But the sacrifice of Christ was an expedient which was not only accepted and approved of by God the Father, acting in the capacity of supreme legislator and ruler, it was a sacrifice which the Father himself provided."¹³⁶

Balmer and Brown also agreed on the view which they took of the extent of the atonement. The view which they developed came to be known as the "double reference theory". According to this view, the atonement has an universal reference by which all of the legal obstacles to the salvation of all are removed; but in addition, it has a special reference to the elect, for whom it infallibly secures salvation.¹³⁷ In our opinion, this view is capable of only a vague and general statement. It differs from the Amyraldian view in maintaining that the atonement itself secures the salvation of the elect, and consequently does not place the purpose of election after that of the atonement. The "double reference" view is closely akin to the view advocated by Davenant at the Synod of Dort.

135. "Academical Lectures," etc., Vol.I, p.427.

136. Ibid., p.418.

137. Summarized from Balmer and Brown's "Statements on Certain Doctrinal Points," etc., pp.4ff, and Brown's "Opinions on Faith," etc., pp.31,32.

H. The Immediate Influence on James Morison

At the time of James Morison's trial, the opinion was widespread that Morison's two professors, Dr Balmer and Dr Brown, were responsible for his heretical opinions on the atonement. This suspicion regarding the orthodoxy of the professors was increased by the fact that during the trial before the Synod they did all they could to shield Morison.¹³⁸ The result was that for a long period of time Balmer and Brown were subjected to some severe criticism, and finally Brown was libelled before the Synod of 1845.¹³⁹ It was because he had been frequently charged in public and in private with the paternity of Morison's views that Dr Brown published in 1841 the pamphlet entitled, "Opinions on Faith, Divine Influence, Human Inability, the Design and Effect of the Death of Christ, Assurance, and the Sonship of Christ".¹⁴⁰ This pamphlet contains extracts from Brown's published writings. Distrust of the two professors, however, continued. William Scott, writing in 1846, declares that young Morison was influenced by John Brown, and, therefore, Brown should have either retracted or been suspended, or Morison should have been restored.¹⁴¹ In giving an account of the trial before the Synod, Adamson says that John Brown had, to a large extent, been the means of leading Morison to the theological position which he then occupied, for Morison himself avowed that he

138. "Report of the Proceedings ... United Associate Synod ... Cases ... James Morison," etc., pp. 70ff and 80.

139. Cairns - "Memoir of John Brown, D.D.," p.247.

140. Ibid., p.217.

141. "The State of Doctrine in the United Secession Church from May 1841 to May 1845," pp.4,5.

had learned from Dr Brown many of the doctrines for which he was on trial.¹⁴²

In the "Memoir" of Balmer, which appears in the first volume of his "Academical Lectures and Pulpit Discourses", it is stated that the root of the evil which sprang up in the Secession Church, and which brought suspicion on Dr Balmer, did not originate in the Divinity Hall.¹⁴³ Cairns declares that in some discussions which sprang out of Brown's dissent from the Synod's condemnation, Brown disclaimed such identity of opinion with Morison as had been erroneously imputed to him.¹⁴⁴ Cairns states further that the publication by Brown of his "Opinions" was sufficient for a candid reader to absolve Dr Brown from any culpable connection with Morison's innovations. While some distant likeness might be traced, the general complexions of the two schemes were different.¹⁴⁵

Our present task is to determine to what extent Balmer and Brown were responsible for the opinions of Morison on the atonement. There can be no doubt that Dr Brown exercised a great influence over young Morison in many ways. Morison thought highly of his professor, and it was from him that he received his love for books and for expository interpretation.¹⁴⁶ It cannot be denied, furthermore, that James Morison was dependent on his teacher for many of his theological views. Morison's view of repentance as a 'change of mind' coincided with that of Dr Brown,¹⁴⁷ as did also

142. W. Adamson - "The Life of the Rev. James Morison, D.D.," p.187.

143. Page 50.

144. "Memoir of John Brown, D.D.," p.227.

145. Ibid., p.217.

146. F. Ferguson - "History of the Evangelical Union," p.5.

147. Compare Brown's "Opinions on Faith," etc., p.33, with Morison's view as we have presented it in Chapter Two.

his opinion that faith is characteristically an operation of the understanding.¹⁴⁸ They agreed also in declaring that godly sorrow is the consequence of repentance, and that fiducial trust flows from faith.¹⁴⁹ Morison agreed with John Brown in holding that faith includes the hope of personal salvation, and that this hope rests on truth, independent of the moods and frames of the mind that cherishes it.¹⁵⁰ These, then, are some of the views which were held by both Morison and Brown, and we believe that the material which we have presented here shows to what a great extent Dr Brown's teaching dominated the thinking of young Morison.

We believe, furthermore, that the responsibility for the form which Morison gave to his doctrine of the nature of the atonement must be placed almost entirely upon Drs Brown and Balmer, and especially upon Dr Brown. We have seen in the last paragraph how much Dr Brown influenced Morison along many lines of thought, and in the first chapter we have noticed that Morison, as a student, had a high regard for both Balmer and Brown. To these general considerations, we must add the further fact, that the doctrine of the nature of the atonement, as taught by Morison, is fundamentally the same as that of his two professors. Both he and they held the governmental view, and it seems that Morison, in his exposition of the doctrine, even borrowed the word "expedient" from Professor Balmer. When all of these facts are considered we cannot believe that we are justi-

148. Compare Morison's view in Chapter Two with Brown's "Opinions on Faith," etc., pp.13-15.

149. Compare Morison's view in Chapter Two with Brown's "Opinions on Faith," etc., p.15.

150. Cairns - "Memoir of John Brown, D.D.," pp.217,218.

fied in looking further than the two professors for the source of Morison's opinion.

Besides the responsibility which is theirs because of their own teaching, Dr Brown and Dr Balmer were also responsible for Morison's views on the nature of the atonement because of the works which they recommended to their students. We have already given the rather long list of names of English and American advocates of the governmental theory who were recommended by Brown. A letter written by Balmer states that he recommended to his classes Payne's "Lectures";¹⁵¹ and he told the Synod that the works of Fuller and Hall were among those to which he most frequently appealed in his classes.¹⁵² Surely some responsibility must be borne by the professors for recommending these works to Morison and his fellow-students. Morison in his earliest writings and in his defence before the Presbytery and Synod shows his acquaintance with the English and American expositors of the governmental theory. In his testimony before the Presbytery,¹⁵³ and also in that given before the Synod,¹⁵⁴ Morison cites Griffin, of the New England School, as a distinguished authority. In his defence also, he mentions Belamy, Hall, and Dwight, and he says that he has been preaching what they preached.¹⁵⁵ These, and a number of other examples of a similar nature which might be given, show us how wide was Morison's

151. Balmer - "Academical Lectures," etc., Vol.I, p.53.

152. Balmer and Brown - "Statements on Certain Doctrinal Points, Made, October 5, 1843, Before the United Associate Synod," p.42.

153. "Charges Brought Against ... James Morison," p.15.

154. "Report ... Proceedings ... United Associate Synod ... Cases ... James Morison," etc., p.29.

155. Ibid., p.20.

knowledge of the English and New England advocates of the governmental theory at a period almost immediately following his leaving the Divinity Hall.

We are unable to point to such an exact agreement between Morison's view of the extent of the atonement and that of his two professors. As has been indicated before, Morison's early view was exactly like that of Amyraut and of the New England divines, while Balmer and Brown developed the "double reference" theory of which we have spoken. Cairns points out the difference between the two views in the following words:

"Mr Morison did not go beyond Dr Brown in holding that the death of Christ might be spoken of as a true atonement for all men, 'so as to lay a foundation for unlimited calls and invitations to mankind to accept salvation in the belief of the gospel; or so as to remove all the obstacles in the way of man's salvation, except those which arise out of his indisposition to receive it'. But he entirely deviated from him in maintaining that Christ died for all men equally, and that the atonement did not secure salvation to the elect; and his placing of the purpose of election after that of atonement he had not learned in the school of Dr Brown, who discouraged all such attempts to divide and arrange the decrees of God as presumptuous and incompetent."¹⁵⁶

As a matter of fact, it is the contention of Cairns that neither Brown nor Balmer lectured on the extent of the atonement, or broached the controverted topics in the Divinity Hall.¹⁵⁷ Balmer, in his "Statement" before the Synod, declared that though he lectured at considerable length on the Divine decrees, he never "made the extent of the atonement the subject of extended, hardly of formal, discussion in the Divinity-Hall". He considered it

156. "Memoir of John Brown, D.D.," p.219.

157. Ibid., p.236.

an unsafe question to discuss at length; so he purposely avoided it.¹⁵⁸

By avoiding in this way a full discussion of the extent of the atonement of our Lord, we believe that Balmer and Brown became at least partially responsible for Morison's doubts and for his adopting an unlimited view of the extent of the atonement. Balmer and Brown taught the governmental view of the nature of the atonement, and a theory of the unlimited extent of the atonement is the natural companion of this. These professors, moreover, recommended the works of men who held either the "double reference" theory or the Amyraldian view. We should take note of the fact that Balmer and Brown spoke and wrote vaguely on the subject of the extent of the atonement, and apparently they did not warn Morison and their other students of the difficulty of interpreting the so-called "universalistic passages" of Scripture. So, while it is not possible for us to charge Drs Balmer and Brown with having taught the theory of the extent of the atonement which Morison adopted, we are inclined to believe that the two professors were, to a certain extent at least, responsible for Morison's adopting an unlimited atonement. We attribute this responsibility to them because of their failure to give him a proper foundation for dealing with such a difficult subject, because they used such vague language when dealing with the extent of the atonement, and because of the works which they recommended.

158. "Statements on Certain Doctrinal Points, Made, October 5, 1843, before the United Associate Synod," p.39.

We can only speculate upon the source from which Morison received his knowledge of the Amyraldian view. In our opinion, there is no reason for assuming that he arrived at it independently, for there are several sources from which he might have received it. We have already pointed out that he was early in his career acquainted with some of the divines of England and New England who held the Amyraldian view. Perhaps it was from one of them that he received it. It is not at all impossible, however, that he was influenced along this line by Dr Wardlaw, who was an advocate of the Amyraldian theory. It will be remembered that it was to Wardlaw that Morison sent his essay on "The Sonship of Christ", after that essay had caused such a stir in the Divinity Hall of the United Secession Church. In two notes appended to Morison's pamphlet, "Saving Faith", reference is made to Wardlaw's essay, "On the Assurance of Faith".¹⁵⁹ Morison was thus early acquainted with Wardlaw, and we are inclined to believe that it was from him that Morison received the Amyraldian theory.

The appearance of the Morisonian views on the nature and extent of the atonement, then, is to be accounted for mainly by the three lines of influence of which we have written. It is not denied that there were other forces which had parts to play in leading James Morison to adopt and to popularize in Scotland the Grotian and the Amyraldian views, but it is our belief that these three influences which we have given are the primary ones. The political and economic theories of the day and the wave of revivalism which was

159. J.M. - "Saving Faith," Notes C and H, pp.48 and 52 (1842 edition).

sweeping over the land prepared the soil in which the teachings of Grotius and Amyraut, after being carried through several lands, took root. The impact of these three forces on James Morison led him to depart from the faith of his fathers and to become the champion of "new" views concerning the death of our Lord.

Appendix A.

In the writings of Morison, we find many references to the "Marrow-men" and to a number of English divines of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Did these have any influence in leading Morison to break with the traditional Calvinism of Scotland, and in leading him to adopt the Grotian and Amyraldian views on the atonement?

In our opinion, the adherents of the "Marrow" cannot be said to have had a direct influence on Morison in the adoption of his distinctive views on the atonement. We believe that they were quoted and appealed to by Morison in order that his views might not appear to be novel, and in order that they might appear to have the approval of men so greatly revered in the Secession Church. The "Marrow" divines would by no means have countenanced the views of Morison, but unfortunately their language was so vague that it could be used to cover serious deviations from the historic faith of Scotland.

There was a way, however, in which the Marrow-men undoubtedly exerted an influence upon Morison and those other men in the United Secession Church who adopted a modified form of Calvinism. Professor Watt declares that the "Marrow" divines received from "The Marrow of Modern Divinity" a "warmth of personal religion"; and this they bequeathed to those who came after them in the Secession Church.¹⁶⁰ This warmth of "evangelical utterance", which, according to Professor Watt, is to be traced back ultimately to Martin Luther, permeated the Secession Church,¹⁶¹ and no doubt this spirit in the Church played a part in leading Morison and others to seek some way of presenting the gospel message so that the difficulties arising from thoroughgoing Calvinism might be avoided. This may account, in part at least, for the rise of the "Atonement Controversy" in the United Secession Church.

The English divines of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, who are often referred to by Morison, include such men as Davenant, Usher, Polhill, and Truman. It is our opinion that these men were not in the line which brought the Grotian and Amyraldian views to James Morison. We believe that Morison referred to them, also, in order that his theories might have the appearance of antiquity, and in order that they might appear to have the sanction of men who were noted for their piety and learning. From them Morison no doubt received many arguments with which to defend his doctrines, but these men were not those who led him to adopt in the first place the views which are associated with his name.

160. "The Influence of Martin Luther on Scottish Religion in the Eighteenth Century," art. in "Records of the Scottish Church History Society," Vol. VI, Part II, 1937, pp. 150, 159.

161. Ibid., pp. 150, 151.

Appendix B.

There are those who maintain that James Morison was dependent on Erskine of Linlathen and John McLeod Campbell for his distinctive doctrines; but, against those who hold this, we agree with J. R. Fleming that there is no evidence that Morison was influenced by either Erskine or Campbell.¹⁶² J. H. Leckie, in the introductory chapter of his book, "Fergus Ferguson, D.D. - His Theology and Heresy Trial", acknowledges that to the best of his knowledge Morison never attributed the origin of his opinions to McLeod Campbell; but, nevertheless, Leckie thinks that "it is hardly conceivable that a man who began his theological studies within three years of a famous controversy knew nothing of the issues involved in it and learned nothing from its contendings." Leckie adds that, if it is true that the Morisonian doctrine was inspired by Dr John Brown, it must have been Brown who was influenced by Campbell, or at least by some one associated with Campbell.¹⁶³ The result of our investigation into the sources of Morison's theories has led us to the conclusion that Dr Leckie's inferences are unnecessary. It is true that Morison acknowledges no indebtedness to McLeod Campbell, and, furthermore, the opinions of Morison, and also those of Brown, can be accounted for, as has been done in the foregoing pages, without assuming that they received their doctrines from Campbell.

162. "A History of the Church in Scotland, 1843-1874," p.10.

163. Page 37 (Summary).

CHAPTER FIVE.

A CRITICISM OF MORISON'S VIEWS
ON THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT.

CHAPTER FIVE.A CRITICISM OF MORISON'S VIEWS
ON THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT.

The theories of the nature and extent of the atonement which are expounded and defended in the writings of James Morison are, in our opinion, unsatisfactory in many respects. Morison, in advocating these views, was undoubtedly attempting to avoid some of the difficulties which must be acknowledged to exist in the Satisfaction doctrine and its companion doctrine, the limited atonement; but it seems to us that, instead of removing difficulties, Morison, by his theories, has actually increased them. In this chapter, therefore, we shall present some of the objections which make it impossible for us to accept his views. Space will not permit us to give all of our objections to the positions which Morison espoused; but we shall state at least some of those which we believe invalidate Morison's governmental theory of the atonement, and we shall also seek to show that the alleged Scriptural grounds for Morison's Arminian view of the extent of the atonement constitute an exceedingly weak foundation upon which to base one's theory of the atonement's extent and upon which to build a system of theology. We shall present first our objections to Morison's theory of the nature of the propitiation; and that will be followed by our criticism of the theory of the universality of the atonement.

Objections to Morison's View of the Nature
of the Atonement.

1. Although Morison claims, in his writings, to be a Biblical theologian, and to have the Bible as his only standard, it is our contention that he does not give any proof from Scripture for the distinctive points of his theory. We have already pointed out that Morison's theological system, and even his view of the nature of the atonement, grew out of his conviction that Christ died for all men without exception and without distinction. It appears that, having become convinced of the universality of the atonement, Morison, on a purely speculative basis, adopted a view of the nature of the atonement which would harmonize with his theory of the extent of the propitiation, for he certainly does not offer any independent evidence from Scripture for his governmental theory. We have carefully examined his writings with the purpose of discovering such proof, but none has been found. It will be recalled that while we devoted many pages to setting forth the Scriptural evidence which Morison offers for his view of the extent of the propitiation, we did not give one proof from Scripture for his distinctive views on the nature of the atonement. The explanation of this is simple - Morison does not give any. We have yet to find quoted in his writings one passage of Scripture which declares that Christ satisfied "public justice". Our search for some Biblical proof that distributive justice has been suspended and superseded has proven equally futile. Nor have we been able to find in the works of Morison any proof from Scripture that Christ suffered a "substitute for the

penalty". In other words, Morison does not give any proof from the Word of God for those parts of his theory which are distinctive.¹

2. The Morisonian theory is untenable, in the second place, because it proceeds on an erroneous conception of the nature and end of the divine punishment against transgression. It will be recalled that, according to the teaching of Morison, God punishes sin in order to deter the subjects of his moral government from its commission. Now, this is a necessary corollary of the theory that all virtue is comprehended in disinterested benevolence. Thus, justice, as Morison makes clear, is merely one mode of benevolence, prompting God to punish the individual sinner that the greater good of the moral universe might thereby be secured.

In criticizing this position, let us note first of all, that while human governments often proceed on the principle that punishment is inflicted merely to restrain others from committing crime, the principle is false. It is not denied that it is one of the important ends of punishment in all governments, human and divine,

1. Dr Wardlaw, in his work on the atonement, presents the same view of the nature of the atonement as appears in the writings of Morison, and yet William White, in his pamphlet, "Dialogues on the Nature and Extent of the Atonement" (p.86), declares that, in those pages of Wardlaw's book in which he sets forth the fundamental principles of his entire view, not one verse of Scripture is given in support of the tenets which are advanced there. A. A. Hodge, in his work, "The Atonement" (pp.316,317 of the British Edition), affirms that the advocates of the governmental theory "do not pretend that they generate" their view "out of Scripture; the most they claim is, that having developed it as a product of speculation, they are able to show that it harmonizes with all the facts of Scripture". He uses the writings of Barnes as an example of this, and declares that the same is true of Beman, Jenkyn, and Taylor.

to prevent crime, but it is denied that this is the sole end. It is an important collateral effect of the administration of justice, rather than its immediate effect. Professor A. E. Taylor declares that the retributive character of punishment is a doctrine really indispensable to sound ethics.² Charles Hodge quotes the following excerpts from the "British Quarterly Review" for October, 1866: "There is a story of an English judge who once said to a criminal, 'you are transported not because you have stolen these goods, but that goods may not be stolen'." The reviewer is said to have added, "No principle more false in itself or more ruinous to public morality was ever announced from the English bench. The whole moral effect of punishment lies in its being just. The man who suffers for the benefit of others is a martyr and not a convict."³ If it is true that the prevention of crime is the primary end of punishment, and if the punishment of the innocent wife and children of a criminal would have a greater restraining influence than the punishment of the guilty man himself, the punishment of these innocent ones would be just. But this would shock the moral sense of men.

It is also a false principle of the theory of Morison that justice can properly be merged into benevolence. (1) Every man's consciousness testifies that justice and benevolence are different sentiments. Benevolence prompts to the promotion of happiness, while justice involves the instinctive judgment that the wrongdoer

2. "The Faith of a Moralist," Series I, "The Theological Implications of Morality," p.183.

3. "Systematic Theology," Vol.II, p.579.

should suffer for his crime. Previous to any reflection upon the possible effect of the punishment upon others, there is the intuitive perception that the crime should be punished on account of its own inherent ill-desert. "The consciences of all good men," writes A. A. Hodge, "are gratified when the just penalty of the law is executed upon the offender, and outraged when he escapes."⁴

(2) The religious consciousness of a man reveals even more distinctly this sense of justice. When a man is convicted of sin, he knows that that sin, as related to the justice of God, is guilt, which ought to be punished. He knows intuitively that by the same necessity by which God disapproves of sin and hates it, His moral perfection calls for the punishment of sin. When a man is convinced of sin in this way, he does not think that he ought to suffer for the good of the moral universe; he knows that he ought to suffer because he is a sinner. Even though he were the only creature in the universe, this conviction would still be present. (3) That this consciousness is not due to Christian influences is proved by the facts that this common consciousness is impressed upon all human languages as far as known, that this innate sense of justice is recorded on the pages of all human history as far as it sets forth the workings of human nature, and that there are expiatory rites in all religions which reveal the inward convictions of men.⁵

The fundamental principles of Morison's theory are false. Since these are false, the theory itself must be unsound.

4. "The Atonement," p.53.

5. Chas. Hodge - "Systematic Theology," Vol.I, pp.421,422 (Summary).

3. We must object also to the theory of Morison because it does not show the connection between the death of Christ and the effects which Morison claims flow from it. He denies that the sacrifice of Christ is of the nature of a vicarious penalty. As we have said in Chapter Three, Morison uses the language of the Satisfaction doctrine to expound his theory, but he does not mean to teach by that language that Christ endured the penalty which was due to men. He says that Christ could never so suffer the consequences of sin as to liberate the sinner from deserving punishment.⁶ What Christ really suffered, then, was a substitute for the penalty - a something in place of the penalty to effect the same purpose. According to Morison, there resulted from Christ's death the same effects which would have followed if the transgressors themselves had endured their deserved everlasting punishment. It manifested God's abhorrence of sin and His determination to punish it. It demonstrated God's regard for His laws and secured the stability of His moral empire. Above all it made it possible for God to relax the law, and to omit the punishment altogether in the case of those sinners who repent.

But how can this be? How is it possible for something which is not of the nature of penalty to secure the same effect as the penalty? How can the sufferings of one person sustain any relation to the sins of another person if the legal relations and responsibilities of the two persons are not the same? "Suffering," as A. A. Hodge correctly observes in his criticism of the govern-

6. J.M. - "The Nature of the Propitiation," p.31.

mental theory, "has relation to sin or it has not. If it has relation to sin, it must either be designed as chastisement or as penalty. The sufferings of Christ had relation to sin, and they were not personal chastisement; they must, therefore, have been penalty - of the genus penalty and of the species vicarious penalty. If this be denied, let some one state definitely what they were, and let it be shown precisely how his suffering, which by hypothesis is not penalty, takes the place and secures the end of the literal punishment of persons whose identical legal obligations do not rest upon the person suffering. How in the name of reason is it possible that the undeserved sufferings of Christ, which were not the penalty which the law demanded, should make it consistent with God's rectoral justice to relax the law, and omit the penalty altogether in the case of repentant sinners?"⁷

James Morison joins the other advocates of the governmental theory in failing to account for the connection between the sufferings of Christ and the effects which it is claimed flow from them. Nowhere in his writings does he answer the difficulties which have been raised on this point; and we believe this omission has resulted from his utter inability to explain how Christ's death could have produced such effects as Morison claims for it.

4. The last criticism which we shall make of Morison's theory of the nature of the atonement is, that it represents the atonement as an unreal display of principles which were not truly in exercise in it. When a plain and unambiguous statement of his theory is

7. "The Atonement," p.308.

considered, it is not difficult to discover that the sufferings of Christ were not penal in their nature, and did not satisfy the inherent justice of God, but were intended merely to produce a moral impression on the minds of men that God abhors sin, has a high regard for the law, and is determined to punish iniquity even when he is extending pardon to transgressors. We can understand this theory in no other way than that it makes the death of Christ an exhibition of what is not really involved in it. It makes the atonement an exhibition of God's determination always to punish sin, and yet there was no punishment in it. The atonement, according to this theory, was supposed to be a demonstration of God's determination to uphold and honour the law, and yet, according to this theory also, the demands of the law were not fulfilled, but were relaxed and set aside. In the death of Christ it is claimed that God manifested His wrath, but how can this be when no wrath was poured out upon Christ? Jowett says of the governmental theory, "If this scheme avoids the difficulty of offering an unworthy satisfaction to God, and so doing violence to His attributes, we can scarcely free it from the equal difficulty of interposing a painful fiction between God and man. Was the spectacle real which was presented before God and the angels on Mount Calvary? ... It (the governmental theory) avoids the physical illusion of the old heretics, and introduces a moral illusion of a worse kind."⁸ No Christian really believes that the sufferings of Christ were designed merely

8. "The Epistles of St. Paul to the Thessalonians, Galatians, and Romans," Vol.II, p.473.

to give us a salutary fright. The Christian knows that what took place in Gethsemane and on Calvary was an intensely real transaction.

A Criticism of Morison's View on
the Extent of the Atonement

Morison is very wise in attaching great importance to the question of the extent of the atonement, for if he can really prove that Christ died upon the Cross of Calvary with the intention of saving all men without exception upon the condition of faith, he has gone a long way in proving the truth of his general position. In addition to this, Morison is able to take the offensive when he discusses this doctrine, and is able to call upon the Calvinists to explain why it is that such phrases as "all" and "world" do not mean all men without exception when they are used with regard to salvation. It cannot be denied that the system of Morison has more appearance of truth at this point than at any other.

Our criticism of Morison's positions on the extent of the atonement, therefore, is very important. If his system proves to be weak at this point, his entire structure will collapse. Our criticism will be limited to Morison's final view on the extent of the atonement; and it will not even be possible to make our criticism of this exhaustive. We shall, however, consider briefly each of the arguments of Morison for the universality of the atonement which we have presented in Chapter Three.

In that chapter, we have given ten passages of Scripture which we believe were considered by Morison to lend the greatest amount

of support to his theory of the unlimited atonement. In six of these passages the argument turns mainly on the use of the words "all" and "world". Before we proceed, therefore, with a consideration of each of the ten passages, there are some general remarks which should be made on the use of these "universalistic" terms.

In every language on earth the terms "all", "every", "the world", and "the whole world" are used, not to include all that ever existed, but to indicate a great many, or some of all sorts. In our everyday life, we use these terms in this way. We say, "The whole world is in a turmoil"; but by this we may have no intention of including every nation or group of people, and every one knows that we have not. Again, we declare, "The whole of Edinburgh turned out to see the procession", but no one understands us to mean that without exception every inhabitant of the city witnessed the procession. John Lightfoot has shown that this loose use of these terms is common in the rabbinical writings of the Jews. He writes, "We very often meet with ... 'All the world confesseth', etc., and ... 'The whole world doth not dissent', etc. By which kind of phrase, both amongst them, and all other languages, is meant a very great number or multitude."⁹ He points out that it is particularly noteworthy that the Jews in these writings frequently distinguish the whole world into "Israel" and "the nations of the world".¹⁰

Many writers have emphasized the fact that the language of the Scriptures does not differ from other languages in this respect. Here also we find these terms used in many different ways. Charles

9. "Works," Vol.XII, p.258.

10. Ibid., p.258.

Burbridge affirms that in Scripture the word "world" is used to signify anything complete in itself, good or bad, even to the tongue of one sinner (James 3:6).¹¹ Gill gives a summary of the different ways in which, in his opinion, the word "world" is used in the Gospel of John. He says that sometimes it signifies the whole universe of created beings (John 1:10); sometimes the habitable earth (John 16:28); sometimes the inhabitants of it (John 1:10); sometimes unconverted people, both elect and reprobate (John 15:19); sometimes the worst part of the world, the wicked (John 17:9); sometimes the better part of it, the elect (John 1:29); sometimes a number of persons, and that a small one in comparison with the rest of mankind (John 12:19). Gill maintains that in John 1:10 alone the word "κόσμος" is used in three different senses: the habitable world, the whole universe, and the inhabitants of the earth.¹² Owen has worked out an elaborate scheme of the various significations of the term "κόσμος" in the whole New Testament. The following is a translation of it from the Latin:

The World is taken,

I. Subjectively

1. Universally.

2. Partially; for

(1) The visible heaven.

(2) The habitable earth.

II. Adjunctively, in respect of,

1. The inhabitants, and that, -

11. "The Reformers and Particular Redemption," art. in "Peace and Truth," Quarterly Organ of the Sovereign Grace Union, Vol. XXII, No.83, July-September, 1938, p.130.

12. "The Cause of God and Truth," p.64.

- (1) Collectively for the whole.
 - (2) Distributively; for, -
 - [1.] Any.
 - [2.] Many.
 - (3) Signally, -
 - [1.] The good, or elect.
 - [2.] The wicked, or reprobate.
 - (4) Indifferently, or in common.
 - (5) Restrictively, or synecdochically; for
 - [1.] The chief.
 - [2.] The Romans.
2. The accidents;
- (1) Of corruption.
 - [1.] Corruption itself.
 - [2.] The seat of corruption.
 - [3.] The earthly condition.
 - (2) Of the curse.¹³

The words "all" and "every" are also used many times in Scripture to mean fewer than all without exception. The following are a few examples in which "all" cannot mean "all without exception": Psalm 65:2; Joel 2:28; Luke 11:42; Acts 9:35; and Romans 1:5. In these places the meanings must be "many", "a great many", and so forth.

The great variety of meanings which these terms have in Scripture impresses upon us the importance of determining the meaning of the universalistic term in any particular passage by a study of the context. The universalistic term of itself by no means proves that every individual without exception is referred to. Even Morison, in a few places, is forced to acknowledge this. In "The Extent of the Atonement", he admits that the term "world" is often used, not of all men without exception, but to signify those who hate Christ,

13. J. Owen - "Works," Vol.X, "The Death of Death in the Death of Christ," p.304. Translation is taken from the Editor's footnote. On pp.304-305, Owen gives Scriptural examples for each of these distinctions.

and His people, and His gospel. He declares that this is true of I John 5:19.¹⁴ In his "Commentary on the Gospel according to St. Mark", he declares that the term "all" is used in the fifth verse of the first chapter in "a free and easy, and popular, way". He holds, however, that it must mean more than "many, namely, 'the great bulk and body of the population'".¹⁵ Morison is of the opinion that the "all" in Mark 1:32 "is to be interpreted in accordance with the way in which it is often freely used in popular parlance";¹⁶ and that in the thirty-seventh verse of the same chapter, the "all" means all of the people "indefinitely" and "in general".¹⁷ It is only in the little book, "Biblical Help Toward Holiness in Living and Happiness in Dying", that he deals at length with the variety of meanings which are given to the term "world" in Scripture. "It is true," writes Morison, "that the word 'world' is sometimes hyperbolically used with a limited reference. Even the expression, 'the whole world', is sometimes thus used."¹⁸ He goes on to express the opinion, however, that when it is used hyperbolically to denote fewer than all men without distinction or exception, it is never used as a synonym for "the elect".¹⁹

Before we proceed with the consideration of the individual passages and arguments which Morison uses to support his position, there is one other remark which should be made. Without assuming

14. "The Extent of the Atonement," p.24.

15. Page 7.

16. Ibid., p.28.

17. Ibid., p.30.

18. Page 26.

19. Ibid., pp.26,27.

an unlimited atonement, a good reason can be assigned for the use of these universalistic terms by the writers of the Scriptures when they were dealing with the work of Christ. We have already seen that the rabbinical writers divided the whole world into "Israel" and "the nations of the world". John Lightfoot gives many examples from these writings which show that it was commonly believed among the Jews that the nations of the world would not only remain unredeemed, but would be "wasted, destroyed, and trodden under foot. The Jews thus taught that God had no regard for the Gentiles, and that when the Messiah would come, he would destroy them. Lightfoot goes on to say that Christ, in addressing Nicodemus in the third chapter of John, and the evangelist, in writing I John 2:2, used the word "world" to make clear that Christ came to be the Redeemer of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews.²⁰ Ralph Wardlaw and Moses Stuart, who, it will be recalled, advocate the doctrine of the universality of the atonement in their writings, agree that in some passages of the New Testament the universalistic terms are used in the sense which Lightfoot has given. After indicating that under the new dispensation there is a general extension of privileges and blessings which under the old had been limited almost entirely to the Jews, Wardlaw asks,

"Can anything, then, be more natural, than that, when the designs of God by the gospel are the subject, such phrases as all men and the world should be used to signify men in general, men of all nations, men without difference; that they should be meant to convey the grand New Testament principle, that 'there is neither Greek nor Jew, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free', - 'no difference between the Jew and the Gentile, the

20. "Works," Vol.XII, pp.258,259.

same Lord over all being rich unto all that call upon him'. - Nothing is more common, than to use a general designation, when that which is affirmed is not true of each individual included in that designation, but when the truth of it respecting even a small number ascertains or illustrates a general principle."21

Moses Stuart, in his "Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews", reveals his agreement with the position that in some passages of the New Testament universalistic terms are used to convey the idea that the redemptive work of Christ was not limited to the Jews. In commenting on Hebrews 2:9, he writes:

"Ἰπὲρ πάντων means, all men without distinction, i.e. both Jew and Gentile. The same view is often given of the death of Christ. See John iii. 14-17; iv. 42; xii. 32; I John ii. 2; iv. 14; I Tim. ii. 3,4; Tit. ii, 11; 2 Pet. iii. 7. Comp. Rom. iii. 29,30; x. 11-13. In all these and the like cases, the words all, and all men, evidently mean Jew and Gentile. They are opposed to the Jewish idea, that the Messiah was connected appropriately and exclusively with the Jews, and that the blessings of the kingdom were appropriately, if not exclusively, theirs. The sacred writers mean to declare, by such expressions, that Christ died really and truly as well, and as much, for the Gentiles as for the Jews; that there is no difference at all in regard to the privileges of any one who may belong to his kingdom; and that all men, without exception, have equal and free access to it. But the considerate interpreter, who understands the nature of this idiom, will never think of seeking, in expressions of this kind, proof of the final salvation of every individual of the human race. Nor do they, when strictly scanned by the usus loquendi of the New Testament, decide directly against the views of those who advocate what is called a particular redemption. The question, in all these phrases, evidently respects the offer of salvation, the opportunity to acquire it through a Redeemer; not the actual application of promises, the fulfilment of which is connected only with repentance and faith. But whether such an offer can be made with sincerity to those who are reprobates (and whom the Saviour knows are and will be such), consistently with the grounds which the advocates for particular redemption maintain, is a question for the theologian rather than the commentator to discuss."22

21. "Two Essays: I. On the Assurance of Faith; II. On the Extent of the Atonement, and Universal Pardon," pp.295,296.

22. Pages 52,53.

Having made these preliminary remarks, we shall now turn our attention to Morison's arguments for the universality of the atonement which we have given in Chapter Three.

(1) I Corinthians 15:1-4: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." Morison argues that Paul is here giving an inspired definition of the gospel which he preached when he first went among the Corinthians, and this gospel is, "Christ died for your sins according to the scriptures".²³

The whole of this argument of Morison rests on the unwarranted assumption that Paul is here quoting the exact words which he used when he first preached the gospel among the Corinthians. The fact is that Paul's statement is given in indirect speech, while Morison, to make his argument seem plausible, is forced to change the words of Paul into direct speech. Paul and the people to whom he is writing are Christians; and so by "our sins" Paul apparently means the sins of Christians. Paul could have merely told the unconverted Corinthians of the sufficiency of the atonement of Christ and of the fact that all who would believe on Him would be forgiven; and

23. Space will permit us to give only a brief statement of each of Morison's arguments in this chapter. The reader is referred back to the fuller statements in Chapter Three.

yet, when he wrote later to those who had accepted Christ, he could have reminded them that when he first came among them he proclaimed "that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures".

(2) I Timothy 2: 1-6: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." As we have seen, Morison declares that this passage is one of the pillars of the doctrine of the universality of the atonement. We believe that, as a proof of that view, it is a pillar which is not able to bear much weight. The passage, according to Morison, teaches that Christians are to pray for all men without exception, because God will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. The proof that God so wills is to be found in the fact that Christ gave himself a ransom for all men. The extent of the atonement, then, is to be measured by the extent of our prayers and the will of God regarding the salvation of men. Since no one will deny that Christians should pray for all men without exception, Christ must have died for all men without exception. Inasmuch also as certain texts and, in addition, the commands and exhortations of the heavenly Father make it certain that He wills the salvation of all men, it

is again clear that Christ must have given Himself a ransom for all men without exception.

There are certain facts, however, which, in our opinion, make this interpretation impossible. Morison has apparently overlooked one passage of Scripture when he declares that "there is surely no man out of hell who can be singled out as one for whom Christians ought not to pray".²⁴ We refer to I John 5:16: "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it." There are, then, some sinners for whom Christians need not pray. Secondly, Timothy and the Ephesian Christians are directed to give thanks for the same "all men" for whom they are to pray, but surely Paul is not commanding them to give thanks for all men without exception. Certainly he is not urging them to give thanks for persecutors and heretics. In I Timothy 1:20, Paul delivers Hymenaeus and Alexander unto Satan. Can it be thought that Paul could be eager for the Ephesians to give thanks for them? It is interesting to note that in his expositions of this passage in "The Extent of the Atonement" and in the "Vindication of the Universality of the Atonement" Morison passes over altogether the idea of giving thanks for all men.

In view of these facts, and in view of the additional fact that "kings" and "all that are in authority" are particularly mentioned, we believe that the "all", in each of these three verses, one, four, and six, does not mean "all men without exception", but

24. "The Extent of the Atonement," p.12.

"all classes of men". This passage is included in Moses Stuart's list of those passages in which the universalistic terms mean "all men without distinction, i.e. both Jew and Gentile";²⁵ and there are many other writers who agree with him that this is the correct interpretation. We believe, however, that Paul, in these verses, is merely emphasizing the fact that the Ephesians are not to exclude from their prayers people of any particular class, for example, kings and other rulers, for it is the will of God that men of all classes of society should be saved, and Christ has given Himself a ransom for men of all classes.

(3) II Corinthians 5: 14-15: "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." Morison understands the "all" in each of the three places in these verses to mean "all men without exception". In his "Vindication of the Universality of the Atonement", he gives the following interpretation of the verses:

"As to the 14th and 15th verses themselves, they are evidently intended to explain the grand constraining motive which impelled the apostle to his intensely zealous labours on behalf of sinners. 'For it is the love of Christ which constraineth us to these labours, although there be many who think we are beside ourselves. It is the love of Christ; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead (or, then all died). We judge, when we consider the fact that one died for all, that all died and are dead because of trespasses and sins; they are dead in law. All are in a doleful plight, and in imminent danger of everlasting misery. And we farther judge that he died for all, that they (of the all) who live, who are quickened through Christ and made alive unto God,

25. "Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews," p.52.

should not henceforth live unto themselves, consulting their own carnal ease, but unto him who died for them and rose again, - whose love therefore should constrain them to spend and be spent in winning souls'."26

In criticizing this interpretation, we wish, in the first place, to call attention to the fact that the accurate rendering of the fourteenth verse is to be found in the Revised Version: "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died." In his "Vindication of the Universality of the Atonement", Morison admits that this is the more accurate translation, but in this later work he retains the interpretation which is given in "The Extent of the Atonement", that is, that the statement, "all men died", means that "all men were dead in trespasses and sin". In giving this explanation, Morison undoubtedly misses the true meaning of the passage. It is evident that this verse teaches that Christ acted as the Representative of those for whom He died. The natural interpretation is that those who were represented by Christ died when He died. Although they differ as to whom Christ represented, Menzies, in his commentary, "The Second Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Corinthians",²⁷ Plummer, in "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians",²⁸ and McFadyen, in his work "The Epistles to the Corinthians",²⁹ agree that Paul is here setting forth the representative principle. According to this view, the "all" for whom Christ died cannot be greater than the number who

26. Page 15.
 27. Page 40.
 28. Page 174.
 29. Page 315.

actually die to sin and self. We know that all men without exception do not die in this way, and, therefore, it cannot be said that Christ died for all men.

Morison, in commenting on the fifteenth verse, says that "the expression 'the living', is evidently partitive".³⁰ This is true, however, only if he has given the correct interpretation of the fourteenth verse, and it is evident that he has not. We understand this fifteenth verse to mean that Christ died for those whom He represented in order that, thus being made alive by His death, they might no longer live unto themselves, but might live unto Christ and unto righteousness.

(4) II Corinthians 5: 19-21: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." The "world" in this passage, according to Morison, means the "world of all men". God "was using means, by the death of Christ for 'all', to reconcile 'all' to himself, that thus it might be competent to him, as 'the universal Magistrate of the world', 'not to impute unto them their trespasses'. This was 'the word of reconciliation' which the Apostle was everywhere to proclaim, and which constitutes, of course, the object of saving faith."³¹ The rest of the passage, in Morison's view, tells

30. "Vindication of the Universality of the Atonement," p.15.

31. "The Extent of the Atonement," p.19.

us that Paul and the others are beseeching all men to be reconciled to God, for God has made Christ "to be sin for us (that is, for you, unreconciled sinners, and for me), who knew no sin; that we (that is, you, unreconciled sinners, and I) might be made the righteousness of God in him".³²

If, however, the interpretation which we have given to the fourteenth and fifteenth verses of this chapter is the correct one, the "world" in the nineteenth verse cannot mean "the world of all men". Furthermore, though Morison says that the death of Christ was the means used by God to reconcile all men unto Himself and to make it "competent" for Him not to impute their trespasses unto them, he cannot mean this in an absolute sense, for, if he did, all men would be saved. To escape universal salvation, Morison must really understand this passage to teach that the death of Christ was the means used by God to try to reconcile the world unto Himself, and to try to make Himself "competent ... not to impute" unto men their trespasses. According to Morison's system, a man does not become reconciled unto God until he believes, and we have seen that, though faith is said to be a gift from God, the act of believing is that of the man himself to such an extent that it is produced without any special influence of the Spirit and that there is merit in it. It is clear, then, that Morison really understands this passage to teach that God was in Christ, trying to reconcile the world unto Himself, and so forth. This is not, however, what the passage says. These verses tell us unmistakably that God was

32. "The Extent of the Atonement," p.20.

"reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them". While there are numerous examples in Scripture for limiting the expression "the world", not one Scriptural instance can be produced for limiting the "reconciling" and the "non-imputation" of sins in this passage.

In view of these facts, we believe that it is the word "world" which must be given a limited significance. It must be the elect who are scattered throughout the world who are spoken of in these verses. If this is true, the passage must mean that God was in Christ, reconciling His chosen ones who are throughout the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. The word of reconciliation has been committed to Paul and his associates as ambassadors for Christ; and they, in Christ's stead, beseech men to be reconciled unto God. God has made Christ, who knew no sin, to be sin for "us" (that is, a group throughout the world who have been chosen by God), in order that "we might be made the righteousness of God in him".

(5) I John 2: 1,2: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." Morison emphasizes the fact that there is a contrast in the second verse - a contrast between the "our sins", that is, the sins of Paul and those to whom he is writing, and the sins of "the whole world". Morison believes that the same meaning is to be given to "the whole world" in I John 2:2 as is given to it in I John 5:19, where it evidently means all of those who are still in their sins. Christ then is not only a propitiation for the sins of

John and those to whom he is writing, but also for the sins of those who are still unforgiven.

If this passage is taken by itself, we admit that the interpretation which Morison has given is a possible one, but we do not believe that this is the only legitimate interpretation which can be given to it. We object to Morison's insisting that "the whole world" in I John 2:2 must mean the unbelieving portion of the race just because it has that meaning in I John 5:19. We have found that the term "*κόσμος*" is used by John in such a great variety of ways that we believe it is quite uncertain to argue from his use of a universalistic term in one passage to discover his use of the same term in another passage. It should be recalled also that I John 2:2 is among those passages in which, according to Moses Stuart, the universalistic terms refer to "all men without distinction, i.e. both Jew and Gentile". Others join him in giving this interpretation; they assert that the verses teach that Christ is not only the propitiation for the Jews, but also for the Gentiles. But Morison objects to this that it cannot be proven that this epistle of John was written to Jews. As a matter of fact, he is quite certain that it was not. The interpretation of Calvin, however, escapes this difficulty, and his view we consider an acceptable one. Calvin writes that the Apostle added, "And not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world," "for the sake of amplifying, in order that the faithful might be assured that the expiation made by Christ extends to all who by faith embrace the gospel".³³ It is our belief

33. "Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles," pp.172,173.

that the passage tells us of the world-wide nature of the gospel; the power of the gospel is not limited to those who already believe, but is to spread throughout the world.

Morison would no doubt ask us, "But are you willing that this meaning should also be given to I John 5:19?" We have already said that we are not inclined to insist that John is uniform in his use of the universalistic terms. In addition to that, however, there is another important consideration. The language which is used in Scripture of the extent of sinfulness is incomparably stronger than that which is used of the extent of the atonement. It is not possible to produce one text in which such language is used of the extent of the atonement, as is employed in Romans 3: 10-12 to express the universality of sin. The passage is as follows: "There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no, not one." This passage really expresses the idea of "all men without exception". We search in vain for such language in the passages which speak of the extent of the atonement.

(6) John 3: 16,17: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." Morison holds that the word "world" in this verse does not mean the "elect", but includes "the whole world of men".

Once more we agree with Morison that he has given a possible

interpretation if the passage is considered by itself. There is, however, another interpretation which we believe is both possible and preferable in the light of all of the facts. In our preliminary remarks, we have given the testimony of John Lightfoot that the rabbinical writers divided the world between the Jews and the Gentiles, and that they believed that the Messiah, when he would come, would destroy the Gentiles. We have also given the opinion of Lightfoot that John 3:16 is one of the places in the New Testament where an attempt is made to overcome this prejudice of the Jews against the Gentiles. We believe that he is right in this. The term "world" is used in this passage to correct the misconceptions of Nicodemus. Christ is telling him that God loves the "world", the Gentiles as well as the Jews, and that God gave His only begotten Son to the "world", to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews. Whosoever in the world believes on Jesus Christ shall be saved. It is important to note that Moses Stuart gives this interpretation to the passage,³⁴ and that Morison does not attempt to refute it.³⁵

(7) I Timothy 1:15: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." Morison declares that, according to this passage, Christ did not come into the world to save some sinners, but to save all sinners.

To this interpretation of Morison, there are several objections which render it a highly improbable explanation of this verse. In

34. "Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews," p.52.

35. See "The Extent of the Atonement," pp.24-26.

the first place, the passage does not say "all sinners", but just "sinners"; so the verse may refer to some or all. Secondly, William Fraser, in the appendix of his pamphlet, "Three Sermons on the Extent of the Atonement," raises what we consider to be a strong objection to Morison's interpretation. He writes:

"I cannot conceive how such reasoning can be used otherwise than disingenuously, by a man of ordinary judgment; or how it can convince any person, of the smallest logical discernment. By the same argument he might prove, that Christ came into the world to save fallen angels, that he died for every one of them, and made atonement for all their iniquities, for they are LOST SINNERS; and that too, in a more emphatical sense, than any sinners of our race upon earth."³⁶

Finally, this passage tells us that Christ came "to save" sinners. According to Morison's system, it must be understood to mean that "Christ came into the world to make sinners salvable". But it is not possible to give one example from Scripture which would justify limiting the meaning of "save" in this verse to "make salvable".

We believe that Calvin gives the correct interpretation of this passage when he affirms that it means that Christ came to bring salvation to sinners, and not to the righteous.³⁷

(8) I John 5: 10,11: "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." Morison interprets these words as meaning that unless a man wishes to make God a liar, he

36. Note B, p.56.

37. "Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon," p.39.

must believe that "God hath given to us, every one of us mankind sinners, and whether we believe it or no, whether we receive it or no, eternal life, and this life is in his Son".³⁸ This does not mean that all shall really inherit eternal life, for to come into actual possession one must accept the gift. Nevertheless, if God has given eternal life to mankind-sinners as such, there must be eternal life in Jesus Christ for "each and all".

Although the argument of Morison on this passage, as it is presented in "The Extent of the Atonement", is obscured by the loose use of words, it cannot be doubted that he understands the gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ to be a conditional one, in other words, it is an offer. As far as these verses are concerned, therefore, we agree with him, for we, too, believe that they teach that there is a universal offer of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. This was, moreover, all that the Marrow-men, whom Morison quotes as supporting his position, understood the passage to mean. The passage, as a whole, teaches us that the person, who does not believe that God has offered salvation to men generally on the condition of faith, makes God a liar, for God has given an adequate witness to the fact that Christ is the Messiah and that whosoever believeth on him shall have everlasting life.

We do not agree, however, with the conclusion which Morison draws from the verses. He holds that a universal offer of the gospel implies a universal atonement, for otherwise God would not be sincere in offering the gift to all men. In a later part of

38. "The Extent of the Atonement," p.28.

this chapter, we shall deal at length with the problem of harmonizing a limited atonement and a universal call; but, at this point, we shall merely say that Morison's inference from the passage proceeds on the unwarranted assumption that we are fully able to comprehend and estimate the eternal purposes of the divine mind. This we deny we are able to do.

(9) Luke 2: 10,11: "And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." This verse, according to Morison, tells us that a Saviour was born for every man. The belief that this is true brings salvation.

When Morison, in interpreting the words of the angel, says that a "Saviour" was born for every man, he is guilty of using loose language, for, according to his view of the nature of the atonement, it was not a "Saviour" at all, but merely "One who makes salvable", who was born. This is not, however, what the angel said; he said that a "Saviour" was born, and no evidence can be given from Scripture for understanding his word "Saviour" to mean "One who makes salvable".

Inasmuch as the Bible rejects "universal salvation", a particular class for whom a Saviour was born must have been implied by the angel. In the light of the rest of the New Testament, this class must be "believers", for they are the ones who are declared to be actually "saved" by Christ. This passage, then, cannot teach the universality of the atonement; it can do nothing more than tell us that an atonement has been provided which is sufficient to "save"

all who believe.

Morison would no doubt object that this is not "good news" to all without exception. To this we would reply that it is "good news" to all in the same sense that Christ's words to Nicodemus in John 3:16, and the reply of Paul and Silas to the Philippian jailor (Acts 16:31) are "good news" for all. A Saviour has been sent into the world, and whosoever will believe on Him will surely be saved by Him. This is not the way in which the "good news" is presented in the writings of James Morison, but it is the way in which it is announced in the Word of God.

(10) II Peter 2: 1: "There were false prophets among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and shall bring upon themselves swift destruction." By this passage, Morison seeks to prove that Christ died for more than those who are ultimately saved, by pointing out that it teaches that some of those for whom Christ died deny Him and bring upon themselves swift destruction. From this Morison infers that Christ died for all men equally.

This is, however, an obscure and doubtful passage upon which to base one's view of the extent of the atonement. It is, in the first place, very doubtful if this verse speaks of Christ at all. The title "*δεσπότης*" is expressive of supreme dominion, the power which a master has over his servants. It is altogether different from the terms which are used in other places to express the purchasing of sinners by the shed blood of Christ. In addition to the text which is under consideration, there is only one other place in

the New Testament where the title can possibly be applied to Christ, and that is Jude 4. Furthermore, Marshall calls attention to the fact "that the first Christian writers, who may be supposed to have understood the language of the New Testament, seem to use the title $\delta\ \delta\epsilon\sigma\pi\acute{o}\tau\eta\varsigma$, as a distinctive appellation of the first person in the Godhead".³⁹

It is also uncertain in what sense the Lord had "bought" the false teachers. Whenever redemption is spoken of, the price is usually mentioned, or the context in one way or another determines the nature of it. That is not true here. Andrew Marshall points out that Macknight, a thoroughgoing Arminian, "sees and admits that the 'buying' cannot mean eternal redemption. 'Because the Lord is said to have bought the persons who denied him, buying cannot mean the buying of those persons from eternal punishment, but must be taken in the sense in which God is said to have bought the Israelites to be His subjects and people, viz., by working miracles for their deliverance out of Egypt, and their introduction into Canaan.'"⁴⁰ For Morison, the "buying" can have only the sense of removing the "legal obstacles" to the salvation of all men. If this is all that the word "bought" means here, we have no objection to Morison's interpretation, for we, too, believe that the "legal obstacles" have been removed by Christ so that God can save whomever He pleases. We cannot believe, however, that this fully explains the Biblical conception of redemption by Christ. In his exposition of his doctrine of the nature of the atonement, Morison

39. "The Atonement," p.226.

40. Ibid., p.228.

is far from proving that it is the teaching of Scripture that the atonement of our Lord is nothing more than the removal of those obstacles which arise out of God's moral government.

The meaning of the passage is difficult to determine. We are quite certain, however, that it does not concern the redemption by Christ of His people. Through the centuries, there has been a difference of opinion among scholars as to whether or not the epistles of Peter were sent to Jewish Christians or to Christians in general. If the former is true, and we are inclined to believe that it is, the opinion of Macknight, given above, is probably accurate. The "buying" no doubt refers to some deliverance which God effected for His people under the old dispensation.

A Criticism of the Arguments Adduced by Morison
as Indirect Scriptural Evidence which Proves that
Christ Died for All

We shall turn now to a consideration of the validity of the indirect Scriptural evidence which Morison adduces in support of the doctrine of the universality of the atonement. It is claimed that this evidence arises "from those truths of revelation which do not directly assert, but which involve, imply, and presuppose that Christ died for all". Brief remarks will be made on each of the arguments which we have summarized in Chapter Three.

Morison seeks to prove the universality of the atonement from the fact that God must be sincere when He "invites, urges, implores, and commands all to 'come and take' salvation, as freely GIVEN unto

all in Christ Jesus".⁴¹

This is the most plausible of the Scriptural arguments which Morison is able to offer, and it would be folly to deny that there is great difficulty in the way of harmonizing the general invitations of the gospel with the special reference of the atonement to those who shall ultimately become partakers of its benefits. In view of all the facts, however, it is presumptuous to declare that God is not sincere in extending a universal call to all men to repent unless an atonement which is universal in its extent has been provided. It is presumed by those who adopt such a position that we have the capacity of fully comprehending the purposes of the divine mind. Cunningham, in his "Historical Theology", deals admirably with this subject. He writes:

"It cannot be proved, - because there is really not any clear and certain medium of probation, - that God, by offering to men indiscriminately, without distinction or exception, through Christ, pardon and acceptance, contradicts the doctrine which He has revealed to us in His own word, as to a limitation, not in the intrinsic sufficiency, but in the intended destination of the atonement. And unless this can be clearly and conclusively proved, we are bound to believe that they are consistent with each other, though we may not be able to perceive and develop this consistency, and, of course, to reject the argument of our opponents as untenable. When we carefully analyze all that is really implied in what God says and does, or authorizes and requires us to say and do in this matter, we can find much that is fitted to show positively that God does not, in offering pardon and acceptance to men indiscriminately, act inconsistently or deceptively, though it is not true that the atonement was universal. And it is easy to prove that He does no injustice to any one; since all who believe what He has revealed to them, and who do what He has given them sufficient motives or reasons for doing, will certainly obtain salvation. And although difficulties will still remain in the matter, which cannot be fully solved, it is easy to show that they just resolve into the one grand difficulty of all religion and of every system of theology, -

41. "The Extent of the Atonement." p.37.

that, namely, of reconciling, or rather of developing, the consistency between the supremacy and sovereignty of God, and the free agency and responsibility of man."⁴²

(2) From the nature and object of faith, Morison argues to prove the universality of the atonement. Faith is merely the believing of a credible report; and it is the duty of every man to give God the fullest credit for the truth of what He says. Saving faith is nothing more than a man's saying, "Christ loved me and gave Himself for me". Since this is so, God's testimony to be believed must be "Christ loved you and gave Himself for you". This indicates that the atonement must be universal in its extent.

This whole argument depends, of course, on the soundness of Morison's views on the nature and object of faith. If space permitted, it would be possible to show that Morison, in his attempt to prove that faith is merely intellectual, ignores much of the relevant material contained in Scripture, and perverts much of that with which he deals. We must content ourselves, however, with showing, in the first place, that no real advance is made here over the arguments from the "universalistic" passages which we have already considered, and, in the second place, that the Scriptures never call upon a sinner to believe first of all the statement, "Christ loved me, and gave Himself for me".

In his pamphlet, "Saving Faith," Morison attempts to prove that the object of saving faith is the statement, "Christ loved me and gave Himself for me, because He has loved and given Himself for all men". He does this by employing only the "universalistic"

42. "Works", Vol.III, p.345.

passages. From this, it is evident that what is not proved by those passages is not proved by this argument which is based on them. We have attempted to show that those passages either do not permit of an absolutely universalistic sense, or, if they do, it is only one of the possible meanings which may legitimately be given to them. They cannot be convincing proof of the universality of atonement. If that is so, they cannot prove that the object of saving faith is the statement, "Christ loved me, and gave Himself for me, because He loved and gave Himself for all men".

The Bible, as we have said, does not call upon a sinner to believe first of all the statement, "Christ loved me, and gave Himself for me". Such a requirement of a sinner is unknown in God's Word. God "does not call upon men," writes Shedd, "to believe that they are elected, or that Christ died for them in particular. He calls upon them to believe that Christ died for sin, for sinners, for the world; that there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved; and that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.... The belief that Christ died for the individual himself is the assurance of faith, and is more than saving faith. It is the end and not the beginning of the process of salvation."⁴³

(3) Morison seeks to establish the truth of the universality of the propitiation from the fact that the gospel is "good news to every creature".

This argument is included in that which Morison advances when

43. "Dogmatic Theology," Vol.II, pp.485,486.

he is dealing with Luke 2:10,11 in the section of "The Extent of the Atonement" in which the individual Scriptural passages are considered. The reader is referred to the answer which has been given earlier in this chapter to Morison's argument from that passage.

(4) From the fact that peace of conscience 'passing all understanding' immediately follows the belief of the gospel, Morison seeks to prove the universality of the atonement.

Morison's argument on this point is not valid; he assumes to be true in his premises what he claims to find to be true in his conclusion.

(5) Morison endeavours to prove the truth of the doctrine of the unlimited atonement from the fact that all Christians do know and say, "Jesus loved me, and gave Himself for me".

We doubt very much this statement of Morison that all Christians do know and say that Christ loved them and gave Himself for them in particular. We do not know that the Bible imposes any such requirement as that; and we believe, furthermore, that there are many who give evidence that their hope for time and eternity rests on Christ, and yet who do not have the assurance which is implied in the statement, "Christ loved me, and gave Himself for me". It is certainly the privilege of the believer to have such assurance, but the Bible nowhere requires it for salvation.

According to Morison's system, of course, it is necessary for every Christian to be able to make that statement, for it is by knowing and saying it that one becomes a Christian. We have noticed, however, in our criticism of Morison's argument for the universality

of the atonement which is drawn from the nature and object of faith that the only basis which Morison has for making the object of faith the statement, "Christ loved me, and gave Himself for me", is his interpretation of the "universalistic" passages. So this argument does not really advance past the arguments drawn from those passages, and it can have no more weight than those arguments.

Morison refers to three verses, however, which are not among the "universalistic" passages which we have considered; and he claims that these verses prove that a man becomes a Christian by discovering the love of God and of Christ for him in particular. In our opinion, these verses are irrelevant. The first is I John 4:19: "We love him, because he first loved us." It should be noted that these are the words of a Christian, and that they were written to Christians. We agree that God loves the believer before the believer loves God, but we fail to see how that proves that the believer knows of the love of Christ for him before he becomes a Christian. The significant part of the second verse (I John 4:16) is, "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us". Here again we have the words of a Christian to Christians, and how these words can prove that a man becomes a Christian by discovering in the Bible the love of God to him is more than we can understand. This passage can tell us nothing more than that a Christian may be sure that God loves him. The last verse is also a statement of the Apostle John to his fellow-Christians. It is I John 3:16: "Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us," etc. A Christian may

have this assurance, but there is no evidence here that a man knows definitely that he is one of the "us" before he believes. These verses contain precious truths, but they do not support the argument of Morison.

(6) From the admitted fact that nothing but unbelief now stands between all sinners and salvation, Morison seeks to establish the truth of the doctrine of the unlimited atonement.

Morison's argument here rests on the assumptions that the distributive justice of God has been overruled and set aside, and that the atonement consisted in Christ's merely satisfying the demands of public justice for all men. We have pointed out earlier in this chapter, however, that Morison offers no proof from Scripture for either of these positions.

(7) The attempt is made by Morison to prove "the universality of the atonement from the fact which will also be admitted by all, that the non-elect have a greater interest in Christ, and relation to him, and hope from him, than devils have".⁴⁴

All will certainly admit that the non-elect have a greater interest in Christ than devils have if all that is meant, as apparently it is in Morison's argument, is that Christ has removed the "legal obstacles" arising from the divine moral government. All will certainly not agree with Morison, however, in making the removal of these legal barriers the whole of the atonement. We have already pointed out that his attempt to make the propitiation nothing more than the satisfaction of public justice is not based on Scripture.

44. "Extent of the Atonement," p.46.

(8) Morison attempts to prove the universality of the atonement from the fact that it is spoken of by the inspired writers in language very different from what they employ when they speak of election, effectual calling, justification, sanctification, or glorification.

We believe, however, that apart from assuming an unlimited atonement good reasons can be assigned for the inspired writers' use of universalistic terms when they were concerned with the extent of the atonement. The atonement is closely linked with the offer of the gospel; so it was very important that the infinite sufficiency of the saving work of Christ be made known. In addition to this, it was necessary that the prejudices of the Jews against the Gentiles be overcome, in order that the gospel might be proclaimed throughout the world. It was not so important to use universalistic terms in connection with the other doctrines which Morison mentions, for they have no relation to any one but God and believers.

There is, nevertheless, at least one verse in which a universalistic term is used with regard to justification. In Romans 5:18, it is written, "As by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." A universalistic term is also used in connection with two other blessings which flow from the atonement, but which are not mentioned by Morison in this argument. They are "reconciliation" and the "non-imputation" of sins. These are used in II Corinthians 5:19 with the word "world". The verse is as follows: "God was in Christ,

reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." So, even as far as the use of universalistic terms is concerned, it is not true that in every case "the atonement stretches far beyond the compass of the actual blessings which are drawn out of it".

(9) The universality of the atonement is argued from "the admitted fact, that it is the duty of every sinner to look upon himself as having by his sins 'pierced the Saviour'; and as therefore bound to 'mourn and be in bitterness'. See Zech. xii: 10."⁴⁵

Not every one will admit that it is the duty of every sinner to look upon himself as having by his sins "pierced the Saviour". Certainly it cannot be the duty of those who have never heard of Christ; so, even if this argument were valid, it would not prove a universal atonement.

The fact is, however, that no proof can be given that this duty is laid on sinners in the Scriptures, especially before they have believed the gospel. The only Scriptural reference which Morison gives as proof of this point is Zechariah 12:10: "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." Most assuredly there is nothing in this passage which can possibly lead one to believe that it is the duty of every sinner to look upon himself as having "pierced the Saviour".

45. "The Extent of the Atonement," p.47.

It should be noted, furthermore, that to say that every sinner should acknowledge that his sins "pierced the Saviour" is just another way of saying that every sinner should believe the statement, "Christ loved me, and died for me". We have shown before that there is no foundation in Scripture for requiring a man to believe this before he becomes a Christian.

(10) From the nature of the Lord's Supper, Morison seeks to prove the universality of the atonement.

It is presumptuous to assume that, because it is said to Christians, "This is my body broken for you", it is also said to unbelievers. If Morison is right in saying that this statement is as true for unbelievers as for believers, we would expect unbelievers to be addressed in Scripture by such words as Morison uses when addressing them, for example by the words, "This Christ's body was broken for YOU, this Christ's blood was shed for YOU".⁴⁶ The fact is, however, that the Scriptures never use such language when addressing unbelievers. The relation of the believer to the Cross is altogether different from that of the unbeliever; and invariably in Scripture the relation of the person to the Cross determines the form in which he is addressed.

(11) The immense difficulty of getting into Christ on any other basis than that of the universality of the atonement leads Morison to believe that the propitiation must be universal in its extent.

This argument is based on Morison's interpretation of the

46. "The Extent of the Atonement," p.49.

universalistic passages. He says that he can have assurance that Christ died for him only because he knows that Christ died for the whole world. After examining these passages as we have done, however, is it possible to have assurance that Christ died for all men without exception?

The Scriptures must afford another basis for assurance, for multitudes who have never heard of the system of Morison have had the assurance that they have been purchased by the shed blood of Christ, and they have not only had the assurance that Christ died to make them salvable, but that he died to save them for time and eternity. How have they gained this assurance? It has been simply by believing in the promises of God that whosoever will put his trust in Christ shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life, that whosoever cometh to Christ shall in no wise be cast out, and that no man shall pluck out of the hand of Christ those who follow Him.

A Consideration of the Passages which Prove that
Christ Died for the Elect Alone

We have brought to an end our criticism of Morison's arguments which are drawn from Scripture to support his doctrine of the extent of the atonement, and now, before we consider the validity of his claim to receive support for his doctrine from the Fathers and Luther and Calvin, we wish to point out that there are a group of passages which make it quite clear that Christ died to save only the elect. We believe that there are large portions of Scripture with which Morison's system cannot be harmonized, but we shall limit our-

selves to a presentation of those passages to which we have referred. Included among them are the passages which declare that Christ died for "His sheep", "His people", "His children", and "His church". It is expressly asserted that Christ came to save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21); that He gave himself for His church (Eph. 5:25); that He laid down His life for His sheep (John 10:1); that He died in order that the children of God who are scattered abroad might be gathered into one (John 11:52); and that He purchased the church with His blood (Acts 20:28). These statements certainly imply that Christ died for one class of people, and that he did not give His life for the rest. They rule out the possibility of an unlimited atonement.

Many convincing reasons can be given why, on the supposition of a definite atonement, general terms should on some occasions be used to make known the fact that the redemption which has been purchased by Christ is suited for all, is sufficient for all, and is offered to all; that the elect are chosen out of all classes of society, and in every generation; and that finally the whole earth shall be redeemed. On the other hand, we are convinced that not one plausible reason can be given by the advocates of the universality of the atonement for the employment of the definite language in the passages which we have mentioned above.

The explanation of John 10:15 which Morison offers in "The Extent of the Atonement"⁴⁷ proves that his powers of ingenuity have been taxed to the utmost by his attempt to harmonize this verse with

47. Pages 64,65.

the doctrine of an indefinite atonement. After acknowledging that the verse is, "I lay down my life for the sheep," he adds, "But mark, it is not said, 'I lay down my life for the sheep only'". Morison declares that while it is a fact that Paul says, "Christ loved me, and gave himself for me", this does not prove that he loved and gave himself for none besides Paul. Morison then gives the following argument from analogy:

"Were I, in passing along the sea-shore, to observe a crowd of people, and to go into the midst of them and learn that they were coolly and coldly looking out upon an unfortunate wretch struggling in the water for his life; and were I instantly to plunge in and rescue the individual, it would be quite right in me to say that I loved that person, and risked my life to save his; but it would be quite wrong in any one to infer from this statement of mine, that I never loved another as much, or did as much to save him."

If it is true, however, that this verse does not prove that Christ laid down His life for His sheep alone, because it does not state that He did it for them "only", it can be inferred that others besides Christ laid down His life for the sheep, for he does not say "Only I lay down my life for the sheep". As well might it be argued also that Christ is not the "only" begotten Son of God, for the Father has simply said, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee"; or, that there are many gods and many mediators, because it is simply declared in Scripture, "There is one God and one Mediator between God and men". Such absurdities could be multiplied almost indefinitely. Surely a canon of interpretation, which, if applied in parallel cases, leads to such unscriptural doctrines, cannot be legitimate.

In answer to Morison's argument that Christ did not love and die for Paul only, even though Paul declares that Christ loved him

and died for him, we wish to point out that there is no parallel between this statement of Paul and the statement that the good Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep. In the first place, there is no distinction drawn in Galatians 2:20 between Paul and others as there is in John 10 between the sheep and the men of the world. In the second place, the love of Christ in Galatians 2:20 is not spoken of as a peculiar distinction conferred on Paul as it is in John 10 with regard to the sheep.

The analogy of the drowning man which Morison gives is not a proper one. To make the cases really parallel, it must be supposed that there are twenty people drowning, and that the rescuer goes among them and chooses the ones he will save. Under such circumstances, is it not right to infer that he risks his life for "only" those whom he seeks to save? Thus, when the whole human race is in danger of perishing, and Christ expressly tells us that He knows His sheep, and that for His sheep He gives His life, can we do otherwise than conclude that He means He will give His life for His sheep alone? The context of John 10:15 makes it clear that "only" is to be understood after "sheep".

Remarks on the "Additional Observations" in Morison's
Pamphlet, "The Extent of the Atonement"

In the "Additional Observations" which Morison has given in the fourth part of his tract, "The Extent of the Atonement", he has fallen into an error which has made its appearance again and again in the history of dogma. He has sought to support his opinions on the extent of the atonement with the authority of the general and

unscientific statements of a large number of theologians who wrote before the doctrine in question had been consciously considered and clearly defined. This is true of the support which he claims to receive for his position from the writings of the Fathers, and, to a large extent, it is true of that support which he claims to receive from the writings of Luther and Calvin. All of these men at times use indefinite language after the familiar example of Scripture when dealing with the extent of the atonement, but none of them appears to have given much consideration to the subject.

Besides this, however, we question very seriously many of the statements of Morison. With regard to the views of Augustine on the extent of the atonement, A. A. Hodge quotes from the "Historical Presentation of Augustinianism and Pelagianism" by Wigger, whom Hodge calls "one of the most capable and impartial witnesses that even Germany has produced in this century".⁴⁸ Wiggers says:

"As, by the predestination theory, only a definite number of elect would obtain salvation, Christ's redemption could extend only to those whom God had destined to salvation ... According to Augustine, therefore, redemption was not universal. God sent his Son into the world, not to redeem the whole sinful race of men, but only the elect. Augustine says: 'By this Mediator God showed that those whom he redeemed by his blood he makes from being evil to be eternally good.' 'Every one that has been redeemed by the blood of Christ is a man, though not every one that is a man has been redeemed by the blood of Christ.' 'No one perishes for whom Christ died.'"49

An examination of some of the later writings of Calvin proves conclusively that Morison is in error in claiming that Calvin in his later years was an advocate of an unlimited atonement. The

48. The nineteenth century.

49. A. A. Hodge - "The Atonement," p.345.

works which Morison quotes to prove his point date from 1540 to 1555; so we can conclude that Calvin, in the opinion of Morison, entered upon the mature period of his life not later than 1540. While it is readily admitted that in some of the works which appeared after that date, Calvin sometimes employs general terms with respect to the design of the death of Christ in a more unguarded manner than would now be done by one of his consistent disciples, it must also be acknowledged that he gives some statements in these later writings which establish beyond a doubt his belief in the limited atonement. In the "Commentaries on the First Epistle to Timothy", written in 1548, we find that, though Calvin uses universalistic terms freely in the first part of his exposition of the first six verses of chapter two, he makes it quite clear, when he comes to the consideration of verse four, that he does not mean these general terms to be taken to include all men without exception. Calvin writes:

"Lastly, he (Paul) demonstrates that God has at heart the salvation of all, because he invites all to the acknowledgment of his truth. This belongs to that kind of argument in which the cause is proved from the effect; for, if 'the gospel is the power of God for salvation to every one that believeth' (Rom. i. 16), it is certain that all those to whom the gospel is addressed are invited to the hope of eternal life. In short, as the calling is a proof of the secret election, so they whom God makes partakers of his gospel are admitted by him to possess salvation; because the gospel reveals to us the righteousness of God, which is a sure entrance into life.

"Hence we see the childish folly of those who represent this passage to be opposed to predestination. 'If God,' say they, 'wishes all men indiscriminately to be saved, it is false that some are predestinated by his eternal purpose to salvation, and others to perdition.' They might have had some ground for saying this, if Paul were speaking here about individual men; although even then we should not have wanted the means of replying to their argument; for, although the will of God ought not to be judged from his secret decrees,

when he reveals them to us by outward signs, yet it does not therefore follow that he has not determined with himself what he intends to do as to every individual man."⁵⁰

In his comments on I John 2:2, Calvin deals more with the extent of the atonement than anywhere else. The work entitled, "The Commentaries on the First Epistle of John", was not written during Calvin's "early life", but in 1551. Calvin writes:

"Here a question may be raised, how have the sins of the whole world been expiated? I pass by the dotages of the fanatics, who under this pretence extend salvation to all the reprobate, and therefore to Satan himself. Such a monstrous thing deserves no refutation. They who seek to avoid this absurdity, have said that Christ suffered sufficiently for the whole world, but efficiently only for the elect. This solution has commonly prevailed in the schools. Though then I allow that what has been said is true, yet I deny that it is suitable to this passage; for the design of John was no other than to make this benefit common to the whole Church. Then under the word all or whole, he does not include the reprobate, but designates those who should believe as well as those who were then scattered through various parts of the world. For then is really made evident, as it is meet, the grace of Christ, when it is declared to be the only true salvation of the world."⁵¹

Conclusion

The evidence of Scripture, in our judgment, is against Morison's theory of the extent of the atonement. As we look back over the ground which we have covered, we cannot do otherwise than conclude that the foundation on which he has based his theory is indeed a weak one. Neither the individual passages to which Morison appeals, nor the more general arguments from Scripture which he gives

50. "Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon," p.54. See also Calvin's treatment of this passage in his speech against Bolsec in 1551 before the "Congregation sur L'Élection Éternelle" in "Calvin-Homme d'Église," pp.91,92.

51. "Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles," p.173.

are able to support the weight which he endeavours to put upon them. We have seen that men in their everyday speech use general terms with limited significations, and that this same phenomenon is to be found in the rabbinical writings and in the language of the New Testament. Even Morison must admit that these terms are often used in the New Testament in a limited sense, his only qualification being that they are never used to signify merely the "elect". Then we have seen that the facts that the gospel is to be preached throughout the world and that the Jews had a strong prejudice against the Gentiles, and so forth, account for the use of general terms by the writers of the Scriptures when they are speaking of the design of the atonement. We have discovered that Moses Stuart and Ralph Wardlaw, both advocates of the universality of the atonement, agree that the general terms in many of the passages which deal with the death of Christ are to be explained as attempts to overcome these Jewish prejudices. Our examination of the particular passages on which Morison depends most of all for support has revealed that many of the passages cannot possibly teach the universality of the atonement. In other cases, it has been evident that Morison's interpretation is only one of those which can reasonably be given to the text. If it were possible to establish independently on Scriptural grounds all of the other points of Morison's system, and if there were no testimonies in the Word of God against the theory that Christ died for all men without exception, we would gladly admit that those passages, which are capable of bearing Morison's interpretation, are witnesses to the truth of his view of the extent of the atonement. The facts, however, as we have said before, and in

many cases have clearly demonstrated, are quite different. It is not possible for the other distinctive features of Morison's theology to be independently supported by Scriptural evidence, and there is a considerable body of evidence with which Morison's interpretation of the "universalistic" passages cannot be harmonized. The passages which teach that Christ died for "His sheep", "His church", and so forth are only a small part of the evidence of Scripture which is diametrically opposed to Morison's theory. If the individual passages which Morison adduces fail to establish the theory of an indefinite atonement, his "indirect Scripture evidence" certainly cannot succeed in doing so, for some of the arguments presented in this are not based on Scripture at all, and the others have their foundation in Morison's interpretation of the "universalistic" passages. In view of these facts, we do not believe that Morison has succeeded in proving that the doctrine of the death of Christ for all men without exception is taught in the Word of God.

CHAPTER SIX.

THE INFLUENCE OF JAMES MORISON
ON THE THEOLOGICAL THOUGHT OF SCOTLAND.

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Almost a century has passed since James Morison was deposed from the ministry of the United Secession Church. During that time a great change has taken place in the theological outlook of Scotland, and it must be admitted that the change has been along the lines advocated by Morison and the Evangelical Union. Long before the death of Dr Morison, the change began to take place, so that much of what had been deemed heterodoxy in the theology of the young minister of Clerk's Lane Church was, before the close of the nineteenth century, in almost every quarter considered to be the truth of the gospel. This change has been variously characterized as a move in the direction of "theological freedom", a "liberalizing of Scottish theology", "a disappearance of the old rigidity", a "toning down of the stern doctrines of the Confession", "a modifying of the traditional Calvinism", a "departure from the faith of the fathers", and so forth. This much, however, is clear - there has been a change, and there has been a tendency to place the stamp of approval on many of the positions advocated by James Morison.

The conviction has grown in Scotland as elsewhere that many of the distinctive points of the old Calvinistic system are untenable. The beginnings of this change are spoken of in two quotations given by J. R. Fleming in his "History of the Church in Scotland - 1843-

1874". The first is from a letter written by Professor A. B. Davidson on June 5, 1865. Professor Davidson wrote:

"The country is in what people who use large words call a transition state - as if the world or nature or man (or God?) could be in any other. Either transition, or stagnation and corruption.... This breaking up of old forms of faith and the combination of the old material into new shapes go on quietly in secret unrecognized by the Churches."¹

The other quotation is taken from a speech which Dr John Tulloch gave in America in 1874 on theological conditions in Scotland. Tulloch is reported to have referred to "the rise of a new spirit of thought unconnected with the old standards".²

Quotations from Professor James Orr and Dr A. M. Hunter will indicate to what length the movement away from the older theology went. In an article on "Calvinism", published in 1910, Professor Orr says:

"From the side both of philosophy and science, with their accompaniment in enlarged Biblical knowledge, new influences have entered into theology in most countries during the last century, which have had the effect of largely transforming all doctrinal schemes. Christianity is increasingly apprehended more from its human, ethical, and spiritual sides, and the tendency is to withdraw interest from the transcendental and speculative aspects of doctrine. This naturally affects Calvinism in an especial degree. The perennial elements of truth in Calvinism will no doubt survive, but it may be questioned whether it will ever occupy so dominant and exclusive a place in the future as it has done in many periods of the past."³

Dr Hunter wrote the following in 1920:

"Were Calvinism rightly to be identified with its body of doctrines, did the elimination of these mean the excision of

1. Page 220.

2. Ibid., p.221.

3. Article in Hasting's "Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics," Vol.III, pp.154,155.

its soul, then indeed it has but a slender hold on life. Already it is as a ghost peeping timidly out of the dark rooms of neglected confessions. As a system of doctrine compactly built together, it is now consigned to the attentions of vivisectionary historians. Querulous impatience clamours for the decision of the High Courts of the Churches to assign it to the custody of the Committee on Ancient Buildings and Ruins, accounted worthy of preservation as an interesting and curious memorial of a dead heroic past, whose mind moved in mysterious ways."⁴

With this change of theological outlook came a change of attitude toward James Morison. The name "Morisonian" was no longer a term of reproach; the Churches, which had once scorned James Morison, now honoured him. Of him, Fairbairn has written, "He ended his life amid the odour of orthodoxy, respected and revered by the sons of the men who had cast him forth; and justly, and therefore kindly, spoken of by tongues that had once been swift to speak in blame."⁵ At the end of Chapter One, we have noted some of the honours which were bestowed upon Dr Morison during the latter part of his life.

As Fairbairn has well said, this change of attitude was not due so much to a change in Morison as to a change in the theological mind of the people.⁶ The doctrinal position of Scotland had moved so far in the direction of the distinctive tenets of James Morison, that much of his heresy had become orthodoxy. The governmental theory of the atonement, which he advocated, did not find a wide reception, but there was an ever increasing adherence to the doctrine of the love of God for all men equally, and the

4. A. M. Hunter - "The Teaching of Calvin," p.296.

5. O. Smeaton - "Principal James Morison," pp.xv,xvi. (An Appreciation by A. M. Fairbairn.)

6. Ibid., p.xvi.

doctrine of a universal provision for the return of men to God. Barr, in his work, "The United Free Church of Scotland", says that Morison "lived to see his doctrines, or many of them, generally accepted and preached throughout Scotland".⁷

The question which we shall seek to answer in this chapter is this - "How much of this change in the theological thought of Scotland can be attributed to the influence of James Morison?" To this question many different answers have been given in the past. Most of that which has been written about Morison in latter years has come from the pens of men who have been very sympathetic towards him and his theological position; so it is not surprising to find that most of the testimonies ascribe to him a large part in bringing about the changed theological outlook. Of all the statements concerning the extent of Morison's influence which we have examined, those by Oliphant Smeaton in his biography of Principal Morison are certainly among the most extreme in their assertion of Morison's importance for subsequent thought in Scotland. Smeaton declares that the religious liberty and freedom from the burdensome doctrine of predestination is due "in large measure to the stand taken by James Morison".⁸ He calls Morison one of the "epoch-making men of whom Scotland has every right to be proud".⁹ "To James Morison," writes Smeaton in another place, "Scotland owes her present broad and liberal doctrines regarding a full, free, and present Atonement."¹⁰ Equally extreme, however, are

7. Page 65.

8. Page 2.

9. Ibid., p.2.

10. "Principal James Morison," pp.232,233.

the words which were spoken by the Rev. Dr Flett, a Baptist clergyman of Paisley, at the Jubilee Demonstration of Dr Morison, After declaring that the idea of the love of God for every man had obtained a firm footing in all of the churches, and would probably receive a universal welcome, Dr Flett added, "The revolution which has taken place is complete; and it has been brought about largely by the labours of our honoured friend, Dr Morison."¹¹ Adamson, in his "Life of the Rev. James Morison, D.D.", does not attempt to conceal his great admiration for the man about whose life and labours he is writing, and he also reveals his firm persuasion that Dr Morison contributed much to produce a change in the religious thought of Scotland; but, when he gives his formal judgment of the extent of this influence, he is more restrained than either of the two men whose opinions have already been given. Adamson affirms that, though there were other agencies at work to bring about this new state of thought and feeling, the preaching and work of Dr Morison, as well as the labours of the other members of the Evangelical Union, had done much "to liberalize Scotch theological opinion, and to permeate the community with more scriptural conceptions of the gospel than those which were previously entertained".¹² A similar judgment is given by the anonymous author of the historical sketch of the Evangelical Union which is given in the opening pages of the "Evangelical Union - Jubilee Conference Memorial Volume".¹³ A somewhat different opinion is expressed by J. H. Leckie in his work

11. "Memorial Volume ... Ministerial Jubilee of the Rev. Principal Morison, D.D.," p.49.

12. Pages 353,354 (Summary).

13. Page 34.

on the theology and heresy trial of Fergus Ferguson. Although he is exceedingly sympathetic towards Morison, he declares that, in its theological aspect, the career of James Morison was not remarkable. Leckie continues by saying that, though Morison did not make any decided mark on the thought of his age, he, nevertheless, "had played a manful part in a battle which issued in a larger freedom".¹⁴ Others, apparently, have thought of the influence of Morison as being of no consequence at all.¹⁵

We do not believe it is possible to give a satisfactory answer to the question concerning the extent of Morison's influence on the theological thought of this country unless the number and strength of the other agencies which were striving to bring about a change be considered. It is because these other influences in the religious life of Scotland during the second half of the last century and the opening years of this have not been taken into consideration that some writers, in our opinion, have tended to overestimate the importance of Morison's contribution. In order that we may form a more accurate judgment than these men have given, we shall notice briefly some of those other forces which have helped to shape recent religious thought in Scotland.

When we were considering the influences which led Morison to adopt his views on the atonement, we found that a large contribution had been made by the political and economic theories of his day. Democratic principles predominated, and the rights and privileges which were enjoyed by a few were demanded for all. These theories

14. "Fergus Ferguson, D.D.," pp.39,40.

15. "Evangelical Union - Jubilee Conference Memorial Volume," p.34.

continued to exert a powerful influence throughout the nineteenth century, and, if anything, they became more influential with the passing of the years. The liberalizing spirit of the age tended more and more to dominate theological thought. With these democratic ideas, it was difficult to harmonize the Calvinistic doctrine of God as the Absolute Sovereign; so it came about that in the thinking of men and women everywhere in Christendom the absolute sovereignty of God assumed less and less importance, in order that the claims of man might be exalted.

The principal philosophical and scientific theories of the nineteenth century were also hostile to the Calvinistic system. From Germany, the Idealistic philosophy spread throughout the world; and in Scotland, as elsewhere, it gave rise to a type of religious instruction which was antagonistic to the Calvinism of the Westminster Confession.¹⁶ For their part, the scientific theories led in one direction to the development of a utilitarian type of mind which denied the worth of anything spiritual. Of still greater importance, however, was the attempt to apply to social life, history, and religion the basic principles of the evolutionary hypothesis. This gave rise to doubt and uncertainty in the minds of many concerning the fundamental doctrines of historical Christianity.¹⁷ There can be no doubt, then, that the traditional views of Christianity in Scotland underwent a great change as a result of contact with these philosophical and scientific theories.

16. A. J. Campbell - "Two Centuries of the Church in Scotland - 1707-1929," p.280.

17. Ibid., p.281.

To turn to the purely theological and religious forces, let us notice first of all that John Brown in the United Presbyterian Church, and Ralph Wardlaw and Lindsay Alexander in the Scottish Congregational Church, continued to use their influence for the spread of "modified Calvinism" in this country.¹⁸ A second and very potent force in Scotland, which led to a departure from many of the distinctive doctrines of thoroughgoing Calvinism and to an increasing adherence to the doctrine of the love of God for all men equally and a universal atonement, was the revivalism which swept over the country from time to time during the second half of last century. Of these revival campaigns during this period, those conducted by Moody and Sankey were by far the most important. Fleming says that the evangelistic movement associated with the first visit of Moody and Sankey turned the mind, especially of the young, "towards a better understanding of the Gospel in its wider applications, and could not rest in the fixed forms of the older orthodoxy".¹⁹ Stewart and Kennedy declare in their history of the Free Church of Scotland that Moody and Sankey gave an impetus to the spread of Arminianism in Scotland, and assisted in giving the doctrine of a universal atonement an almost unchallenged place in its theology.²⁰ One needs only to examine the hymn books which were used at these

18. J. R. Fleming - "A History of the Church in Scotland, 1843-1874," p.48; "Professor Macgregor's Speech: Including a Reply to Criticisms on His Pamphlet on The Question of Principle Now Raised in the Free Church," etc., p.34; "Rev. W. Lindsay Alexander," art. in "The Evangelical Repository," 9th Series, Vol.II, No.7, April, 1887, pp.41-44 (Summary).

19. "A History of the Church in Scotland, 1875-1929," p.5.

20. "The Free Church of Scotland, 1843-1910," p.52.

evangelistic meetings to discover that Arminian doctrine was at the heart of the message.

A third force which exerted a considerable influence during the nineteenth century in helping to bring about a "toning down" of some of the distinctive points of the traditional Calvinism was the Broad Church movement. This movement was largely within the Established Church; and, according to A. J. Campbell, it sought to keep alive in that Church the teachings of John McLeod Campbell.²¹ Principal Macleod declares that the members of the Broad Church group were never in love with the "Faith" which is embodied in the Westminster Confession, and that they sought to lead a movement away from the old doctrine.²² They preached a gospel which was universal, and they emphasized the "Fatherhood of God" rather than His sovereignty. It is the opinion of A. J. Campbell that the Broad Church group "led the way back from the traditionalists and their cast-iron dogmas to the study of the Person, Life and Teaching of Christ".²³ Campbell says that this party did not disappear until it had leavened the whole Church.²⁴

During the second half of the nineteenth century, there was an increasing acquaintance on the part of Scotsmen with the theology of Germany;²⁵ and Dr John Tulloch, speaking in America in

21. "Two Centuries of the Church in Scotland, 1707-1929," p.284.

22. "The Reformed Faith in Modern Scotland," art. in "The Princeton Theological Review," Vol.XXIV, April, 1926, pp.183, 184.

23. "Two Centuries of the Church in Scotland, 1707-1929," p.284.

24. Ibid., p.291.

25. J. R. Fleming - "A History of the Church in Scotland, 1875-1929," p.5.

1874, indicated that this German theology was one of the sources of a rapidly growing spirit of thought in Scotland which was "unconnected with the old standards".²⁶ When dealing with the attraction which German thought had for the younger men in the ministry of the Free Church, Principal Macleod writes, "The adoption, unconscious though it may have been at first, of principles, borrowed from the Liberal Evangelicals, and even from the Rationalistic Schools, of Germany, which at bottom were at variance with the necessary subsumptions of Calvinistic Orthodoxy, led by degrees to the abandonment of the Old Theology..."²⁷ James Orr, in his volume on "Ritschlianism", reveals also how powerful the influence of Ritschl and his followers was in Scotland toward the close of the last century.²⁸ In the Ritschlian system, the work of Christ is viewed only as a means by which the subjective obstacles (ignorance, distrust, sense of guilt) which hinder the sinner's approach to God are removed. God is thought of as pure love, and from this it follows that there can be nothing properly judicial or retributive in His dealing with the world. Original sin is denied; and personal sin, which is merely the offspring of ignorance and weakness, needs only to be repented of to be forgiven.²⁹ The widespread adoption of such views naturally involved a radical change in the theological position of this country.

26. J. R. Fleming - "A History of the Church in Scotland, 1843-1874." p.221.

27. "The Reformed Faith in Modern Scotland," art. in "The Princeton Theological Review," Vol.XXIV, April, 1926, pp.186,187.

28. "Ritschlianism - Expository and Critical Essays," pp.3,33,53.

29. Ibid., pp.26 and 47,48.

This survey, rapid though it has been, shows us clearly that there were a number of forces which were exerting a disintegrating influence on the older theological system of Scotland, and which were substituting in its place a type of thought which had much in common with the system of James Morison. As we turn now to estimate the extent of Morison's influence in helping to bring about this change, what we have learned from this survey should enable us to see his contribution in its proper perspective and to give a balanced and accurate judgment.

The denomination, of which Morison was really the founder and of which he was by far the foremost leader during all but a few years of its independent existence, was a small body. At the time of its union with the Congregational churches of this country, the Evangelical Union had only ninety fully organized churches, and only two-thirds of these were entirely self-supporting.³⁰ There were only about twelve thousand members in 1889.³¹ Like many other minorities, however, especially when they have been persecuted, the Evangelical Union was a zealous band; and what they lacked in numbers, they made up in enthusiasm.³² W. B. Selbie is no doubt correct when he says that this group had an influence far out of proportion to their size numerically.³³ For many years after the Evangelical Union had been founded, the members were untiring in

30. J. Ross - "A History of Congregational Independency in Scotland," p.150.

31. "Memorial Volume ... Ministerial Jubilee of the Rev. Principal Morison, D.D.," p.103. (Statement from the "Methodist Recorder," London, 24th Oct., 1889.)

32. Ibid., p.103.

33. "Congregationalism," p.152.

their efforts to win followers. While we may be quite sure that the derision which was heaped on the members of the Union, and the partial ostracism which resulted from uniting with the movement, kept many from becoming "Morisonians", we may be certain also that those who did join the Union were incited by persecution to hold their views more steadfastly and to be more zealous in their propagation.³⁴

There were many ways in which the distinctive views of Morison were spread throughout Scotland. His trials caused a great stir throughout the land; newspapers and periodicals dealt at length with the proceedings of both the Presbytery and the Synod.³⁵ The early pamphlets of Morison were widely circulated, and an understanding of his position was eagerly sought. Even those, to whom the views of the young "heretic" were repugnant, helped to make them known, for the large number of tracts and pamphlets which were written to combat "Morisonianism" doubtless carried some knowledge of Morison's views into places which his own writings never reached. Adamson writes, "In the workshops, on the way to and from church, and in the homes of the people, the doctrines in dispute were canvassed, and many were anxious to know what was to be done with the young heretic of Kilmarnock."³⁶

It was not as a theologian, however, but as a commentator, that Morison earned his fame, and was most highly honoured beyond his own

34. "Evangelical Union - Jubilee Conference Memorial Volume," p.34.

35. Adamson - "Life of the Rev. James Morison, D.D.," pp.160 and 181.

36. Ibid., p.161.

rather narrow circle of followers. For many years his commentaries, especially those on Matthew and Mark, were very popular. It is the judgment of Fleming that Morison's commentaries on Matthew and Mark were the best which were published in the seventh decade of the century.³⁷ Small, in his "History of the Congregations of the United Presbyterian Church from 1733 to 1900", affirms that these two works are the property of the "Church universal".³⁸ Professor George Milligan, in his article, "The Commentaries of Principal James Morison, D.D. - an Appreciation", speaks of these commentaries as "one of the most important contributions of British scholarship to the interpretation of the New Testament in the nineteenth century".³⁹ These testimonies are sufficient to indicate Morison's importance as a commentator. Now, these works are permeated with the distinctive principles of the Morisonian theology, and it is our conviction that James Morison influenced the general theological outlook of Scotland as much as a commentator as in any other way.

It is an exceedingly difficult task to estimate with any degree of accuracy the extent of the influence of any man on the thought of his own time and on that of the generations which follow. There must always be many factors which are overlooked. That James Morison was in many ways an outstanding man must be admitted, but how much of the change which has come in theological thought is due to

37. "A History of the Church in Scotland, 1843-1874," p.253.

38. Page 290.

39. Article in "The Expository Times," Vol.XXVIII, No.7, April, 1917, p.296.

his influence is difficult to determine. If we are to judge by the extent of the knowledge of his works, or even of his name, to-day, we must confess that his influence has been slight. We all know, however, that even the truly great are sometimes quickly forgotten; so it is not wise for us to conclude that James Morison exerted little influence just because his memory has not endured in the minds of the people.

Let us see if the historians are not able to give us more help in making our estimate of the extent of Morison's contribution. An examination of a number of histories of the churches in Scotland has revealed that some historians do not mention James Morison at all, that others merely mention him, and that still others give a brief account of his life, teaching, and influence. The last form the largest class. Henderson, in his work, "The Religious Controversies of Scotland", devotes a chapter to a consideration of "Morisonianism", but it must be acknowledged that it is one of the shortest chapters in the book. From this data, we believe that it can be concluded that the church historians consider the movement inaugurated by James Morison to have been an important one in the shaping of theological thought in Scotland, but that, at the same time, they do not regard it as one of the most influential of such movements as had their rise in the nineteenth century.

This judgment of the historians is sound. Those who have attached no importance to the Morisonian movement have been in error. Those who have gone to the other extreme have also been mistaken in their judgment. Those men have been much nearer the truth who have recognized in James Morison a man with outstanding gifts, and who

have been persuaded that, while there have been many agencies at work to bring about a change in the theological position of Scotland, James Morison certainly had a part in this work. We believe that the full truth is told when to this last judgment is added the acknowledgment that Morisonianism was not among the greatest forces of its age. As far as extent of influence is concerned, we do not believe it can be compared with the political, economic, scientific, and philosophical theories of the last century. Nor do we believe that its influence in producing the change in religious thought approaches in greatness that of the Moody and Sankey revivals, or that of the German theology, or that of the Broad Church movement.

The importance of Morison's influence on theological thought, therefore, is not to be underestimated, even though it was of less significance than some others. For one who would understand the change which has come in the theological and religious thought of the Scottish people, especially in its beginnings, the Morisonian movement should not be neglected, for it was one of the first of many movements which had purposes similar to its own.

By the beginning of this century the movement to modify the theology of Scotland had done its work. Along with its emphasis on the love of God for all men equally and an atonement for all, there went a repudiation of the doctrines of the retributive justice of God, unconditional election, and the inability of man to turn to God in his own strength. More recently, however, there has come a great disillusionment concerning the spiritual powers of unredeemed men. Many of the humanistic principles, which were assumed to be true by those who were instrumental in changing

Scottish theology, are being questioned to-day. The result is that the pendulum has now begun to swing away from the theological position towards the supremacy of which Morison and his followers contributed. We have reason to hope that we are living at the dawning of a better day, when there will be a more perfect presentation of the facts regarding God and man.

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